

PORTFOLIO TIMES

strange phenomena - curiosities - prodigies - portents - mysteries



Stoke Tremors and other Quakes... 6

strange fires...3, more Cornish unidentifieds...17,

the Blood of St Januarius...5.

Miracles...7.

STEVE MOORE on Greenwich phenomena... 8

of lasting Bulbs; boundless Energy & Aerial Mines...15

ROBERT FORREST on Leys, UFOs and Chance...20

50p : \$1.00.

16



FORTEAN TIMES

A Contemporary Record
of Strange Phenomena

FORTEAN TIMES is a non-profitmaking bimonthly miscellany of news, notes and references on current strange phenomena and related subjects. Formerly **THE NEWS**. Affiliated to the International Fortean Organisation (INFO) in continuing the work of **CHARLES FORT** (1874-1932). **FORTEAN TIMES** is edited and published by Robert JM Rickard: Post Office Stores, Aldermaston, Reading RG7 4LJ, Berks, England.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: 1 year (6 issues) £3.00/USA \$1.00. Back issues (if available) 50p/USA \$1.00. Air-mail (overseas) add £1.50/USA \$3.00 per year to sub. rate. Annual index free to current subscribers, otherwise 30p/USA 60¢. *Special joint subscription to Fortean Times and INFO Journal: 1 year (12 issues) £7.00/USA \$14.00.* All overseas payments by cheque should include 10% to cover banking exchange commission.

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JUNE 1976

Fortean Times.

This is the first issue under the name **Fortean Times** - and nothing else has changed, and we pledge ourselves anew to serving Forteanism by working towards a quick, reliable and broad coverage of contemporary Fortean events and relevant subjects and information, to get cases into circulation, research and the record. As an information source, and a tool, we are only as good as our own sources. For this reason we can never guarantee truth, but regard the data as 'descriptions' and points at which to begin further research. We try to present the raw material, with minimal editorial interference - ultimately the choice of interpretation is yours.

For that reason, also, our coverage is largely determined by the goodwill of readers in sending us notes, clippings or copies of any interesting items that come their way. We are always keen to receive such data from local papers, and are always seeking to extend our coverage. One day we might be able to do this more actively than our present limitation of passively collecting from journals and papers; but where possible we do encourage local correspondents and first-hand accounts.

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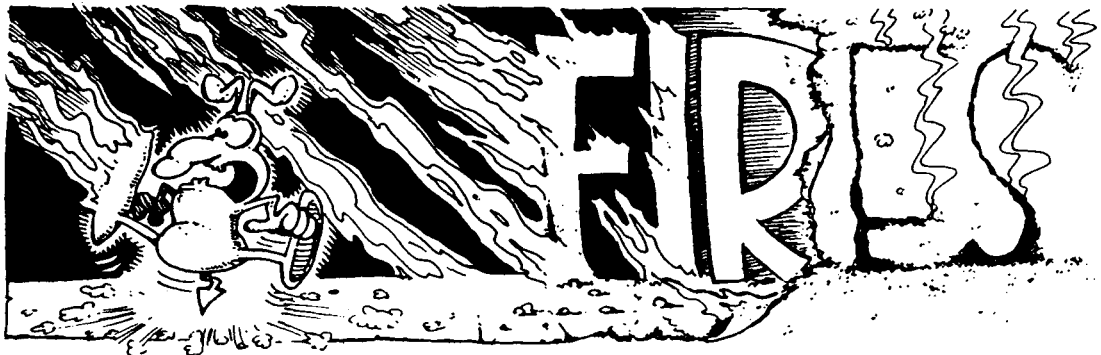
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* * * * *

Hunt Emerson '**FT**' Poster offer - see p13.



Port didn't invent the notion of spontaneously combusting humans - it was a classic mania of the 17th and 18th centuries, and featured in lurid popular literature, tomes of medical jurisprudence (on the grounds that murderers would burn the evidence and appeal to SHC), temperance tracts and all manner of warnings against the ungodly. Dickens, Marryat, De Quincey, Zola, Melville and others all refer to SHC in their works. Scientists such as Baron Justus von Leibig have refuted the idea on the grounds that it makes a nonsense of the known behaviour of the universe. We Forteans are not much interested in proving science wrong, or in proving the existence of SHC - both are secondary to studying what evidence we can gather. If we apply rigorous standards, SHC can be shown to have neither been proved nor disproved - to us it should only have the temporary function of serving as an aid to correlating our evidence. To hold fast to SHC may blind us to other more fundamental phenomena in the evidence because the 'obvious' patterns that we can recognise are those imposed on us by our culture and not those arising spontaneously in the world. What follows is data correlated around a theme suggestive of SHC. Some of it is shaky, some enigmatic and made easier to grasp by the SHC hypothesis. Caveat Emptor! (For further discussion - see 'Reviews' p24.)

Spontaneous Localised Fires.

In the latest issue of Pursuit (Jan 76) R Martin Wolf details a case that seems as classic as the burning of Mrs Reeser on 1 July 1951, perhaps the most famous SHC case of all. We refer you to p16 of Pursuit for the account of the strange death (unaccountable burns and injuries) of Mrs Esther Cooks on 12 Jan 75 in Miami, Florida.

Can people spontaneously flame? It's a complicated issue, but one interesting piece of information recently appeared in an interview with Soviet parapsychologist Genady Sergeyev, in the Sunday People 14 March 76. Referring to the powerful telekinetic medium Nina Kulagina, he said: "She can draw energy somehow from all around her...On several occ-

asions the force rushing into her body left burn marks up to 4ins long on her arms and hands...I was with her once when her clothing caught fire from this energy flow - it literally flamed up. I helped put out the flames and saved some of the burned clothing as an exhibit." Shades of Port's Lilly White!

Now if something similar happens in SHC, fatally, you can imagine the consternation among the police, fire departments and coroners and doctors, who are obliged in law to fix the cause of death. According to the Daily Mirror 17 July 75, the number of fire-deaths had risen again (1973;758: 1974;827) and if the breakdown is anything like that of previous years, the largest single category is 'Cause-unknown', followed some way behind by the next largest cause: 'Smoking materials'. We sympathise with the authorities when they have to resort to "supposed" causes of fire, but for our purposes we must remember this lack of positive evidence cuts both ways, leaving the matter open. From that point of view, we must omit here perhaps 20 cases of which nothing more can be said than someone died in a fire of unknown origin, and devote what little space we have for meatier stuff.

Some Fire-death Riddles.

After being alerted by a neighbour, fire and police officials discovered Mrs Edith Thompson, 75, dead in her Littlewood Rd, Cheslyn Hay, Staffs, flat. Although the officials said she had apparently been lighting a fire, we notice they also said they were trying to "locate the cause" of the fire. There was little damage, except to an armchair - one of the signatures of SHC. Birmingham Evening Mail 17 Feb 72.

TV actor, Derek Boote, was dressed up in a space-monster costume ready to shoot a Welsh-language children's space comedy thriller, 'Maldwyn Aldwyn' at BBC's Cardiff TV studios ((can you accept that?)) when screams were heard from his dressing room. Rescuers rushed in to find him in flames, and attempted to beat them out. Boote was taken to hospital where he was said to be critically ill. The

cause of the fire was said to be unknown. Daily Express 14 Oct 74 - CR; Roger Randle.

A man was killed in a fire at his home in Walker, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, but not by the fire. It appears that Thomas Watt died when two aerosol cans exploded. The slow-fire that caused them to explode and start another fire is the mystery, for its origins could not be traced. Daily Mirror 24 Aug 74.

Mr William Cashmore, 82, died in a fire in his home at Autumn Close, High Heath, Walsall, along with his dog and budgie. Investigating officials found gas and electrical appliances in order and the only signs of fire were in Mr Cashmore's clothing, and a charred chair. One in the eye for the usual anti-SHC theory is that he was a non-smoker, and the origins of the fire remain unknown. Sunday Mercury 23 March 75. All the above happened the day before the report, except Mrs Thompson, who died the same day as the report.

Hot Beds of SHC?

Roland Davies was "rather poorly" in hospital - 26 Aug - after his bed caught fire in his flat in Corby, Northants. Cause unknown. Daily Express 27 Aug 74. Cr: Steev Moore.

Firemen rushed into a bedroom at the Air Terminal Hotel, Kensington, London - 12 Sept - to put a fire in a bed. A doctor examined the bed's occupant, and staff changed the linen, while the man slept soundly throughout the entire proceedings. Either he was a Taoist of legendary imperturbability, or victim of the strange trance-like state which Fort was first to notice accompanying SHC, rendering the victim oblivious to what was happening until too late. The Sun 13 Sept 74. Cr: Phil Ledger.

Mrs Ellen Steers, 79, died, in the early hours of 29 Aug, during a fire, which started in her bed and spread to the rest of her room in her house in Stoney Lane, Shaw, Berks. She had a history of hypochondria and once overdosed, and regularly smoked in bed, despite warnings from friends of the danger. Her husband had been buried the day before, but she had not seemed "unduly stressed" by the event, said her doctor. Despite all these 'conventional' clues, the cause of the fire could not be ascertained - the burning of the bed had been so fierce as to leave virtually no evidence. Mrs Steers was found behind the closed bathroom door - asphyxiated. Whether or not it is applicable here, Fort was also the first to note the incidence of strange fires, sometimes fatal, on or in the vicinity of 'no-hoppers'. Newbury Weekly News 19 Sept 74.

Terry Nelson, 33, of Digby St, Scunthorpe, Lincs, was treated in hospital for burns on his leg after his mattress burst into flames while he slept on the night of 18 Oct. No cause was found, or given, by the firement. Scunthorpe Evening Telegraph 19 Oct 74. Cr: Nigel Watson.

David Webb, 20, pleaded guilty at Maryle-

bone Court to arson - so officialdom is satisfied, but we are not, for verily, this is a fishy one. The date isn't given but we assume from usual procedures that the report and arraignment each followed very shortly. At a guess then, on the night of the 24/25th March, David was arrested for being drunk in a Paddington street. He was taken to Paddington Green police station, where, according to the later court testimony of Det. Sgt Hawkins, he was searched and put in a cell. 30 minutes later, according to David's statement, he was sitting quietly on the bed when flames began to rise around him. After attempting to beat them out with his jacket he passed out from the smoke, and was dragged out by alerted officers. In court it was said that David "had a drink problem" and was frequently in suicidal depressions, committing acts he could not later recall. If the mattress had spon.combed, David was in no state to notice - in fact he would have been the first to agree that in the absence of any 'rational' explanation, he "must have started it" and said so, adding that he could not remember doing so. We wonder too, about that search, and whether we are right in assuming that all dangerous items are taken from prisoners, as a matter of course. If so, David had nothing to start the fire with. We wonder... Paddington Mercury 26 March 76. Cr Colin & Janet Bord.

Fire-prone.

Your editor has long been interested in the connexion suggested by Fort between poltergeist-type activity and outbreaks, even series, of strange fires. The connecting notion is one of unconscious human agency. Closely associated with this is another notion - that some people can be fire-prone, just as others are prone to runs of accidents, good luck, etc. I mention these as observable phenomena without, at this point at least, ascribing any process or meaning to them.

We have mentioned fire-proneness before - News 1/10; 3/10 - the case to hand is of Mrs Barbara Booley who, when questioned about 7 fires, told police: "Fires seem to follow me around. But I swear on any child's head that I didn't start them." Fire 1: at Berkeley Vale Hotel, Stone, Glos, in Aug 71. Mrs Booley worked as a cook, and had been given notice. The fire was the night before she left. Fire 2: at St Hilda's School, Bridgewater, Somerset, Nov 71. Two pupils smell smoke and raise the alarm - blaze in one of the dormitories. Fire 3: in Bath High School for girls, Easter 73. "Because I'd had a few words with a housemistress the previous day, police tried to pin the fire on me." Fire 4: Swan Hotel, Tewkesbury, Glos, Aug 73. A car caught fire in a yard, and police accuse Mrs Booley. Fire 5: same hotel, two days later. Fire found in a furniture storeroom & Mrs Booley questioned. Fire 6: same hotel. Mrs Booley had left, but was nevertheless questioned again. Fire 7:

Torbay Hotel, Sidmouth, Devon, early Oct 75. Mrs Booley had been sacked the day before, but when bedding caught fire on a stair, she helped put out the blaze. "One hell of a coincidence," she claims. And how! She says she wishes she had been charged, then she'd be able to clear her name. She admits she has a temper, and had rows with managements 24hrs before a blaze-up, but swears she had no hand in the fires. See Fort (again - but then he was the pioneer who blazed the trail - oops!) ch13 of Wild Talents, for stories suggestive of repressed hates and vengences that may have been expressed through spontaneous outbreaks of fire. The Booley story is from News of the World 19 Oct 75. Cr: Carl Grove.

Sometimes the poltergeist-analogy is more specific - see the National Enquirer 4 Nov 75 for a story of the van Reenan family (with 8 children) who have had to move from their 2nd home in Plettenberg Bay, South Africa, because of fiery persecutions. An estimated 100 fires had broken out in about 3 months from 5th May. Carpets, toys, curtains, chairs, beds would suddenly flame putting them in "continual terror". "Our two family Bibles began showing scorch marks," says Mrs van Reenan. "They got worse day by day, until one day both Bibles caught fire at the same time." This convinced them that they were under attack by something "evil", a view supported by Rev. Jacobus van Zyl, of the African Methodist Church, who has himself seen at least a dozen fires spring out

of nowhere in their home. Apparently local housing officials and policemen have also seen thing suddenly smolder and blaze, and a forensic examination of various items concludes that no chemicals were causing the phenomena.

The true value of Fort's pioneer work is the way some of his scenarios seem destined to be repeated again and again. This time we are referring to officials confronted with an enigma for which they lack a 'rational' explanation, and coerce the principle (usually, as in many polt cases, a pubescent, unhappy, youth or girl) into confessing they did it, however that jibes with the factual evidence. In Bath Juvenile Court, police alleged a boy went into a deserted house and lit a fire, and when it went out of control, shoved it down a hole in the floor in the hope it would stop burning. They suggest the boy panicked and called the fire-brigade - who, when they arrived found another fire going not far away. Police took the boy to be questioned, and he "admitted" causing both fires. The defending solicitor suggested the boy only admitted this because he was "under pressure". The boy's headmaster confirmed this, saying the boy was sub-normal. The magistrate reprimanded the police for interrogating the boy without waiting for the boy's parents or a solicitor to be present, and found the boy not guilty. Which leave two unexplained fires. Story from Bath & West Evening Chronicle 3 Oct 75. Cr: J Michell.

Geophysical Curiosities



There's some damned weird things going on. This first quarter of 1976 has seen much geological activity. But first:

The Blood that Failed.

In the Santa Chiara basilica, Naples, are two phials of dark powder, said to be the blood of St Januarius, patron of that city. Twice a year, the first Saturday in May and 19th Sept the phials are held up to the congregation and if the powder turns to liquid the whole of Naples breathes a sigh of relief, for although Rome frowns on this miracle, it is popularly believed to be an assurance from

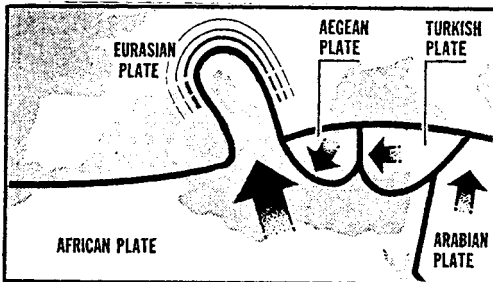
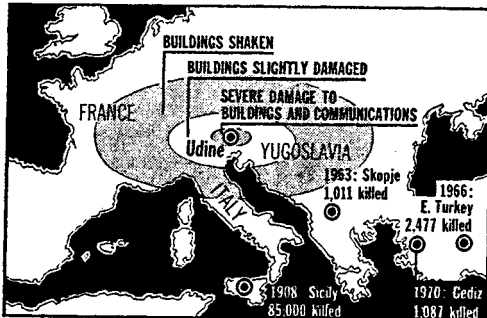
the saint of good luck for the city for the next six months. Records have been kept since the first recorded liquifaction in 1329, and naturally the event has attracted poohpoohing scientists and philosophers over the years, who, pained at a mess on the floor of their tidy universe, cover it up with explanations. But it won't go away. If the priests really are working a con, why should the 'miracle' fail, eh? It increases its value as a miracle the scoffers would say, and in all fairness, I suppose any disaster that happens after it fails will be blamed on its failing. Ah well, swings and round-

bouts. Well it failed in 1527 heralding a great plague; in 1835, it was cholera; and in 1944, the massacre of an uprising against the Germans. That's not overdoing it, is it? In writing up a section for the book with John Michell I had just finished mentioning that the Washington Post 8 May 1967 recorded that the blood failed to liquify on time, but did so after 24hrs strenuous prayer - I had just noticed, then, that the first Saturday in May this year was none other but that grand pagan feast kept by church-goer and communist alike - Mayday. The blood failed to liquify. See the Daily Express 3rd May, and Times 5th May, for the "great disappointment" of Naples and a growing expectation of doom among the superstitious.

Quake - Udine, N Italy.

As if to confirm the worst fears of the Napolese, at 10pm on the 7th, on the sixth day of the failed liquifaction, at Udine, the earth opened and gnashed with jagged jaws, rumbling its own prophecies of destruction, and fulfilling them. Hundreds died and thousands lost their homes.

According to the Daily Express 8 May it was 6.9 Richter - New Scientist 13 May gives 6.5 Richter - either way the severest in the region for 75 years. For full details see these sources (most national papers for the 8th & 9th). Tremors were still being felt on the 12th May.



The blood of St Januarius has still refused to liquify, and many Italians, looking for an omen for the coming General Election in

which the Communists are expected to sweep to power, have taken it as a sign of worse to come.

Rumbles from Jack Ashley and Stoke.

As a footnote to the Udine quake, Dr Patrick Willmore of the Global Seismology Unit, Edinburgh, warned that it could happen in Britain. He said there had already been "22 tremors within the last 3 years, and statistics show they are getting worse." - Daily Express 8 May 76.

We feel Dr Willmore has been over-cautious, for this figure has been exceeded in the trembling area of Stoke alone. For the beginnings and background to the continuing saga of Trent Vale tremors, see the article on Leicestershire phenomena, in News 12, by Paul Devereux and Andy York. As far as our notes go, a tremor on the 9th April was announced as the 25th in just under a year (Daily Telegraph 10 April). Another came on the 13th. A conference at Stoke two days later of the Institute of Geological Sciences (IGS), the Coal Board, Keele and Edinburgh Universities teams investigating the problem, revealed the astonishing news (to everyone outside Trent Vale) that the tremors were coming at the rate of 12 per week, totalling 86 since investigations began in Sept 75 (Telegraph 17 April). According to the Sunday Telegraph, 18 April, residents of Flash Lane have noticed that of all the nights of the week, the rattlings seem to occur most frequently on Fridays, dubbed 'Tremor Night'.

Alluding to the frequency of the tremors, the Minister of State, Department of the Environment, Mr Denis Howell, said in the Commons, on 27 April, that of nearly 90 tremors recorded between Sept 75 and March 76, most were too small to be discerned by the inhabitants, but "Six were severe enough to be felt, particularly the two on 9th and 13th April." This was in reply to Mr Jack Ashley, MP of the affected area, asking the government for assurances that the research teams would be kept in the area until the cause was found. "While there is no cause for panic, there is cause for concern...People are entitled to know the causes...(and) who or what is responsible for them. They are entitled not only to peace of mind, but to the fullest possible information..." (Hansard 27 April. Cr: Ken Rogers.) Indeed it is estimated that there are about 125 claims for damages pending. One early theory was that mine-workings were collapsing, but this is not the case. Mr Ashley won his assurance - not only were the investigations going to be cut short, but when the latest wave of tremors began, the work was only going to be extended to October. In a statement (Hansard 5 May), Mr Shore gave a repeated assurance the equipment and teams would stay in Stoke "until the cause of the tremors has been established."

The seismologists have been under pressure from all sides to come up with an 'explanation', poor sods. But they did not make matters any easier for themselves by announcing (Daily Express 12 April) their plans to set off a test explosion. "Just a small exploratory bang," Jeffery Rains, a Mines & Quarries Inspector, joked weakly. This we must see, and await news that Flash Lane has slid into the bowels of the earth. Our last intelligence is of tremors on 13th and 19th May (Daily Mail, 14 May; Times 20 May. Cr: S Moore, K Rogers; and for most items above, RE White.)

Other Recent Quakes.

- 4 Feb - San Martin, Guatemala.
- 6 Feb - San Martin, Guatemala; with many small tremors between the two. Estimated 10,000 dead. Details in most national papers between 5 & 8th Feb.
- 18 Feb - mystery tremor rattles Fife & Lothian. Global Seismology Unit (who know only what their instruments tell them, i.e., what they are set up to look for) blames a plane breaking the sound-barrier. Come off it fellas

this is the 20th century! Why not admit it, if you don't know? Times 18 Feb 76. Cr: Tony Roberts.

- 20 Feb - mystery tremor shakes house in Faulkner St, Liverpool. Local rock adjustment blamed. Liverpool Echo 20 Feb 76. Cr: Peter Rogerson.
- 25 Mar - Hopkinsville, Kentucky. Audience reel out of cinema showing the film 'Earthquake' praising the special FX only to find a real in progress outside. Synchronicity, eh? Daily Mail 26 March 76. Cr: Steve Moore.
- 17 May - Gazli, Tashkent, Samarkand & Bokhara in Soviet Uzbekistan. Measured 7.2 Richter, and claimed to be more destructive than Udine (see opp. page). London Evening News 17 May.
- 18 May - Same area of Uzbek Republic as above but less strong. Daily Mail 19 May. Same paper for 21 May, reports 10,000 homeless. Soviet authorities claim to have predicted the quake & evacuated towns in time - but curious detail: "torrential rains & landslides also caused casualties on the same day." Cr: Steve Moore.



Bleeding Christ Cures Many.

There have been some strange 'coincidences' as John Michell and I have tackled various sections of our book. As we wrote about St Januarius (see 'Geophysical Curiosities' on p 5) the liquifaction failed and a quake struck northern Italy. Again, as we worked on a section on bleeding and weeping icons and statues, in January, two astonishing new cases came to hand that very month...one we present here because of the miracle healing associated with it; the other will be kept back for a future collection of stories of strange flows and seepings of liquid.

One night in Jan 1968, an altar boy was approaching the crucifix in the church in the small Brazilian town of Porto das Caixas, when he saw a bright red substance dripping onto the table below the cross, and shouted in amazement. The entire congregation saw blood seeping from the 300-yr-old painted

wood life-size statue of Christ on the Cross. The next day the story reached the ears of Archbishop Antonio de Almeida Moraes, who immediately instigated a commission.

The commission has ratified 8 miraculous cures to date, though the unofficial number is many times greater than that. The eight are: a 6-yr-old boy whose vision was restored after an eye was punctured by a sewing needle; a 29-yr-old wife who recovered from a crippling disease; 3 cancer victims whose symptoms just vanished; a 66-yr-old judge whose cataracts cleared over night, restoring his vision; a 20-yr-old man paralysed from the waist by a spinal injury who got up out of his wheelchair and walked; and a 35-yr-old woman whose internal hemorrhages healed up. In each case the commission was presented with doctors' records, including the biopsies of the cancer sufferers,

cont on p13..

NOTES ON GREENWICH PHENOMENA



Part 3 of a
Taoist interpretation of
Fortean phenomenology
by Steve Moore.

The time has now come to attempt to interpret Fortean phenomena in terms of yin and yang, and their relation to local geography. Let it be understood that I am not seeking to apply the doctrine of Feng Shui here, which, even if it had any particular relevance to the phenomena, would probably not be applicable outside its native Chinese context. The yin and yang are believed to be universal principles, though, so we may be on firmer ground. And while basically sticking to the Greenwich area, I hope to be forgiven for straying into other locales for additional evidence...

YIN, YANG & THE GEOGRAPHY OF GREENWICH.

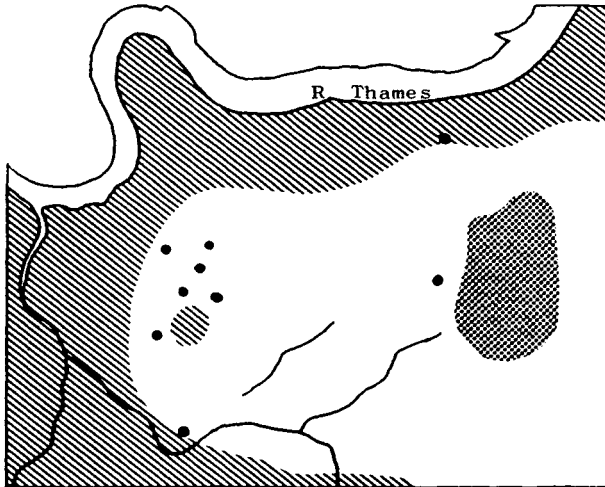
A broad outline of the yin-yang balance in the area is shown in the sketch map, which should be compared with the map accompanying part 1 (NEWS 14). Shooters Hill is the highest hill in S.E. London, and the only major eminence for miles around. High ground, it will be remembered, is yang.

To the north, south and west of the area, the ground drops away, giving low-lying yin ground. The rest of the area is fairly level overall, but other factors give it a high yin:

Water: The River Quaggy (though little more than a large stream) runs through the SW corner of the area, and is joined from the north by Kid Brook and the Lower Kid Brook. Drainage streams, rising to the west of Shooters Hill, feed into the latter. There are also numerous ponds, natural and artificial, and reservoirs, especially to the west.

Tunnel, caverns & denholes: these, being under the earth, are places of high yin. There is a denhole to the north, and another to south of Shooters Hill. Tunnels or conduits, seemingly from Tudor times, exist in the region of Eltham Palace, and also under various parts of Greenwich Park, which may be associated with the, since-disappeared, Greenwich Palace. These tunnels are traditionally supposed to link up, taking in a huge underground apartment near Eltham, but there is no evidence to back this up. There are three miles of ancient chalk tunnels north of the Hill, near Plumstead Marshes, in the NW of the area (Marshes, we need hardly point out, are further yin areas). There are also natural caverns under Blackheath, near Greenwich Park.

Tumuli: these can also be defined as yin, being associated with death and burial underground, and being constructed of earth. The greatest concentration of burial mounds is in Greenwich Park, about 30 in close proximity, ris-



Yin & Yang areas in Greenwich.

Compare with map accompanying Part 1 for positions of phenomena.

Rivers, streams, ponds, etc, are shown in solid black.

High ground (major yang):



Low ground (major yin):



Level ground (medium yin):



ing no more than a foot or two above ground level. I am suggesting here that the yin is increased by the presence of the graves, not that they were placed there because it was yin. There is no suggestion that our ancestors knew anything of Feng-Shui (the graves are badly positioned anyway) and I am looking at conditions that might apply to phenomena currently taking place, regardless of when those conditions began to apply, are

There ~~also~~ three mounds extant on Shooters Hill, which may be seen as reducing the yang of the hill, but any effect they may have is more than compensated for by the presence of four radio masts, a Victorian Water Tower, and the single tower of 'Severndroog Castle', all of which can be taken as of high yang potential by reason of their shape; tall, thrusting toward heaven, pointed, even phallic...

Simply, we have a high yang area in Shooters Hill, while the rest of the area can be taken as highly yin. We now turn to the phenomena, listed in part 1 (NEWS 14).

MYSTERY ANIMALS

(See Part 1, cases 1 & 2). The one common factor in all sightings of the 'cheetah' is water. But in order to establish a geographical link between MAs and water, we must look at a wider range of reports than this. And there we run into the problem mentioned in Part 2: that such geographical details are frequently omitted from reports... so we are left with some cases where there is a positive link, and many where there may, or may not be. However,

Bob Rickard (1) finds enough evidence to suggest a possible link, although by no means enough to establish it positively...there are just not enough details in the reports.

If MAs, in their most usual, panther-like form, were simply ordinary animals, a relationship with water would not concern us. But the evidence seems to show that they are anything but ordinary. It has been suggested (1,2) that MAs and 'Black Dog' apparitions are closely connected. I would further suggest that they are differing forms of an identical phenomenon. To take an analogy from UFO studies: it now seems accepted that the 'airships' of the 19th century, and the 'flying saucers' of the 20th, are differing forms of the same phenomenon, 'shaped' to fit the world-view of the time. So, I believe our MAs appeared of old, and still do in country areas, as Black Dogs, while at present, perhaps as a result of increased knowledge of zoology, perhaps because the majority of city-dwellers would be too ignorant to notice anything strange about a large black dog, they appear as panthers and such like.

MAs seem to exhibit varying degrees of solidity, from little more than apparitions, to leaving behind physical traces such as paw-prints. Black Dogs seem to be more rarified, though there are accounts of physical remains. One I have to hand (3) mentions that after the 'creature' disappeared, there remained 'a large spot as if gunpowder had been exploded there'. It seems then, that MAs and Black Dogs 'condense' out of some invisible state, and, as they are never caught, 'evaporate' again

after a certain time.

Whether MAS and Black Dogs are 'materialised psychisms' is open to question. I admit to having no idea to what state of the mass psyche they would synchronistically correspond. But an idle notion occurs to me while typing this: although the impending deadline prevents me following it up. This century has seen a massive increase in world population, which would presumably 'strengthen' our posited mass psyche. This might explain not only the upswing in UFO sightings, but also why modern MAS seem to be more material than their predecessors. But this of course is merely speculation.

Let us return to the subject of Black Dogs, which I think can be defined mainly as yin manifestations. Their colour, their associations with death and so on, their appearance mainly at night, all seem to indicate this. The name of the Welsh Dog is also interesting, the Cron Annwn: 'Annwn is an adaptation of Annwnn, a bottomless or immeasurable pit, voidless space' (4).

With Black Dogs we are on much firmer ground with our water associations. Dan Butcher (5) has pointed out several connections between the Dogs and water, and several cases in Notes & Queries connect them with pools and streams, and also valleys and churchyards...both yin areas.

The connection does not seem to require the actual physical presence of water, however. A dried up stream bed would retain the same characteristics. An interesting parallel comes from China, where influences carried by water are 'called 'Shui Shen', 'aquatic spiritual agencies'. Rivers and rivulets, brooks and gullies, lakes, tanks, ponds and seas, being the bearers of the waters showered down from the heavens, are all bearers of these Shui Shen. Even when perfectly dry, they are still regarded as such..."(6). In China, these Shui Shen are positive influences; in the West it would seem that negative influences (Black Dogs) are connected with water (more notions on this reversal will be found in forthcoming articles (7)).

Finally, and because nothing is ever simple, it must be said that MAS/Black Dogs are not entirely yin. They have the power of movement, which is a yang characteristic, and several Black Dog accounts mention them having large, blazing red eyes, which would also indicate a certain yangness. We might say they are nine parts yin, one yang.

To summarise, we would expect MAS and

Black Dogs to appear in connection with water, and perhaps more interestingly, moving along watercourses...non-straight lines of negative influence which might balance the positive influences carried by straight ley-lines.

GHOSTS.

(Part 1, cases 5-20) The Chinese believed that man had two souls, the Hun (yang) and the P'o (yin). After death, the Hun becomes a Shen (an immortal, ethereal soul) and goes to the otherworld, or is reborn. The P'o becomes a Kuei (the animal soul) which remains in or near the grave, and is variously thought either to fade away after a time, or to receive the ancestral sacrifices, and if it does not get these, it goes haunting (6), similar to our classic idea of the ghost. Thus to the Chinese, at least, ghosts are yin.

Some less abstruse pointers to the yin condition of ghosts can also be found: They generally appear at night, when the yin is most powerful, they are associated with burial, and thus with earth, there is frequently an unnatural cold associated with their presence, and they generally stay in one place; by this I mean that, although they may perform repetitive local motions, they seem generally to be tied to one location. 'Phantom Armies' and the like, which move through an area once and are not seen again, I would imagine to be a completely different phenomenon; a vision, rather than a 'true' ghost.

From this, I would expect all the ghost cases to lie in the yin portion of the Greenwich area, and none on the yang heights of Shooters Hill; and this is exactly what does happen. Whether the correlation can be extended to other areas remains to be seen...

UFOs.

UFOlogy is such a complex field that I approach the subject with considerable trepidation. Because of this complexity, I hope to be forgiven for narrowing my sights, disregarding such controversial aspects as 'contact' cases, and concentrating on the simple 'lights-in-the-sky' and 'fireball' variety, which I intend to treat as strange 'natural' phenomena arising in the vicinity of the Earth. I realise that I leave myself open to criticism by doing this; but on the other hand, the complexity of the subject might suggest that there are several solutions, rather than just one, to the several aspects of the UFO phenomenon.

UFOs of this class, then, can be defined as Yang. They are bright lights, appear in the sky (and so are of Heaven) and are extremely active. Jung (8) likened them to "a volatile liquid which condenses out of an invisible state into the form of drops". We have, perhaps, a similarity to MAS...though here the phenomenon is yang. Also, we note that UFOs seem to appear with greater frequency in the summer months (9), when the yang is at its peak.

I have found only two UFO sightings in the area (Cases 3 & 4), so my notion here is distinctly theoretical. These sightings occurred close to, but on either side of Shooters Hill. If UFOs arise from the yang, the most likely place of origin would be over or near a hill, where the high yang ground rises toward the greater yang Heaven. If, in the Organic Universe, everything seeks balance, the UFO would then be expected to move away from the yang hill toward yin, either to low ground or water.

Dan Butcher (5) has expounded on the connection between UFOs and water at some length, showing how many UFOs appear to seek water, and his recommendable work lists numerous examples.

Paul Devereux & Andrew York (10) list many UFO sightings in Leicestershire, and a great number of these occur in the vicinity of Croft Hill, as we might expect. Cradle Hill at Warminster is another UFO-active eminence which springs to mind. Devereux & York also point out that there was considerable UFO activity at the time of the Trent Vale tremors, and we also have numerous records of fireballs appearing in conjunction with quakes. One might almost speculate that imbalances in the yin Earth set up imbalances in the yang sky which result in UFOs; and if there should be anything in this notion, the case where UFOs appeared in conjunction with a waterspout (11) is especially interesting...

ICE FALLS.

Up to now, we have been looking at phenomena which arise in a predictable way, yang UFOs from the yang sky, etc. In this and the following section, events become more complex, as the process seems reversed: we might look upon them as 'breakdowns' or 'short-circuits' in the system.

It will be recalled that the T'ai Chi diagram (part 2) shows the yang containing the 'seed' of the yin, and vice-versa. This is a pictorial representation of the idea of cyclical change, which will be familiar to any reader of

the I Ching. At the moment of greatest growth, decay begins to set in; and so, as the yang reaches its greatest concentration, it begins to give way to the yin. The change can be gradual, or very sudden...

Let us begin with the Shooters Hill 'ice storms' (Case 21, and the almost identical event mentioned in the Tailpiece to this article). In both cases, the day was exceedingly hot and, toward the end of the afternoon when the temperature was at its highest, lightning started to flash, without a noticeable build-up of storm clouds, in the second case at least. We can say, in effect, that the sky was massively charged with yang. This electrical storm moving into contact with the yang height of Shooters Hill resulted in an overload of yang which, turning into its opposite, showed down chunks of yin ice (Of course, I am not entirely ignorant of the usual explanations of the weather: but a yin-yang interpretation can be made as well...).

Falls of single blocks of ice, in apparently normal weather conditions, present greater problems. But there do seem to be enough cases where ice has fallen out of a clear blue sky, and thus, presumably, on a hot day, to suggest that a similar interpretation might be placed on them.

Falls of other material, such as straw, blood, etc., would seem inexplicable in these terms, even if frogs, fish and toads are thought by the Chinese to be yin animals. But such as these can hardly be looked on as 'condensations from an invisible state', which is what most of our phenomena are. Ice can, although its materialness means that we are here pushing the notion to its limit...

SPONTANEOUS COMBUSTION.

Unfortunately (or perhaps fortunately) there seem to be no cases of spontaneous human combustion in my area. But this can also be seen as a 'breakdown' event.

I referred earlier to the Chinese notion that man has two souls. In the male (and we can deal only with the male, as Chinese philosophers seem to have disregarded the female entirely, and it seems uncertain if the same principles apply to both sexes) old age and death are believed to be caused by a build-up of yin in the body and the strengthening of the (yin) P'o soul. When the build up reaches a terminal imbalance, the result is death.

Although there are some cases of younger people combusting spontaneously, most of the 'classic cases' involve persons of middle or old age. Also, an attempted analysis of 50 cases that I carried out some time ago (12) showed (and it was just about the only conclusive result!) that 80% of these events occurred between December and May...winter and early spring, when, by the calendar, the yin may be considered at its peak. We have, then, an imbalance among the victims, caused by a build-up of yin, at very yin times of year. In combustion cases it seems the yin is overcharged, and produces its opposite: very yang flames from inside the body. In both this and the case of ice falls, balance is restored, though rather in an over-compensatory way...

CONCLUSION.

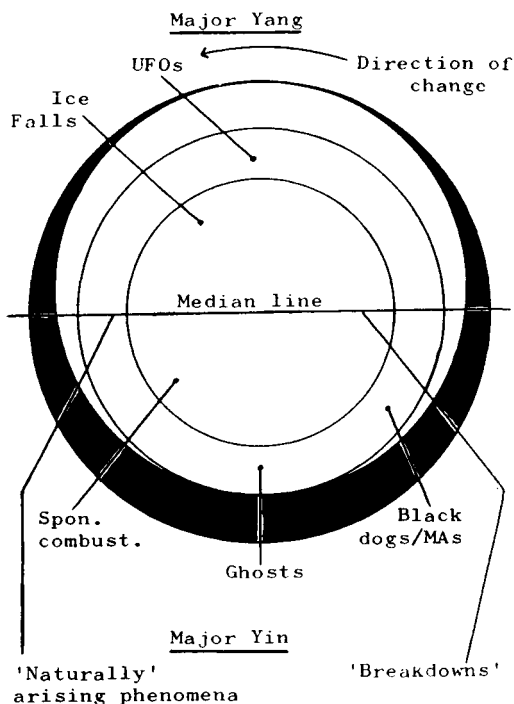
Although the Chinese believed in the reality of the yin and yang, I cannot expect the reader to do the same. They should, instead, be looked on as symbols relevant to the phenomena discussed. As in acupuncture, a meridian line seems to show no physical difference to any other part of the body, yet by using that meridian (a symbol, if you will), definite physical results can be obtained; so, by using the yin and yang as symbols, we can work out a general theory about some Fortean phenomena, and also, perhaps, predict those areas where they are most likely to occur.

At certain places, and times, there are concentrations of yang, at others of yin. But the tendency seems to be toward balance: toward an even distribution of yin and yang.

So yin ground thrusts up ghosts and Black Dogs/MAS (and it would be interesting to know if the latter moved toward yang ground, but data is lacking). The yang sky sends down UFOs and fireballs, usually moving toward yin. These phenomena could be regarded as part of the 'natural' balancing process. But occasionally the system overloads, and there is too great a concentration of one principle. As the system tries to balance itself, the overload is converted into its opposite, giving ice-falls and spontaneous combustion. These could be regarded as 'unnatural' processes, though the movement toward balance is still present. The accompanying diagram attempts to show this graphically.

Naturally, a great deal more information, from other areas, would be needed to confirm any of this, and turn these inadequate gropings into some sort of theory. Whether such a task is worth

undertaking, I can only leave the reader to decide...



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- 4) Notes & Queries, Vol 1, No 19, p 294. 9 Mar 1850
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- 7) S Moore: 'Feng Shui & Ley Lines', 'Mirroring'. Ley Hunter 72, 73.
- 8) CG Jung: Flying Saucers. Collected Works, Vol 10. Routledge.
- 9) RJ Willis: 'UFO Statistics' INFO Journal 4, Spring 69.
- 10) P Devereux & A York: 'Portrait of a Fault Area' NEWS 11, 12.
- 11) NEWS 6, p 17.
- 12) This work has not been published. Cases were drawn from Fort, Edwards, Russell, Willis, et al.

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TAILPIECE - NEW FALL OF LARGE HAIL.

8th May 1976. The day had been hot and sultry, the temperature being in the upper 70s, generally, and sometime before 6-00pm an electrical storm broke out to the west, moving closer to Shooters Hill up until 6-50, although without any noticeable build-up of storm clouds, almost negligible wind, and no particular indication that rain was imminent. I was at the top of Shooters Hill at 6-50, when the hail announced itself from the west with a noise like gravel being unloaded onto concrete. About 5 seconds later, hailstones over an inch across were falling, and continued to fall, unaccompanied by rain, for about two minutes, being followed by half an hour of torrential rain. Apart from Shooters Hill, the hail also seems to have struck Plumstead, Woolwich, Charlton and Eltham. Damage seems to have been generally slight, though I have come across one or two reports of damaged greenhouses and conservatories. And apart from bruises, there seem to have been no casualties.

One report from Shooters Hill mentions hailstones the 'size of golfballs'. A more measured estimate from Plumstead mentions a diameter of $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches. The random examples I picked up hurriedly in the pouring rain measured, on average, 1 inch across, with the biggest $1\frac{1}{8}$ inches. Most of the stones were of a somewhat flattened, irregular shape, though many were more nearly spherical. The outer layer of ice was clear, and the surface was covered in irregular, crystalline formations. Within was a thin opaque layer, a thicker clear one, the thickest opaque one, and the clear centre.

A fullish account can be found in the Kentish Independent, 13 May 76, and mentions in (Kentish) Mercury, same date, and Sunday Express, 9 May 76.

Steve Moore, May 76

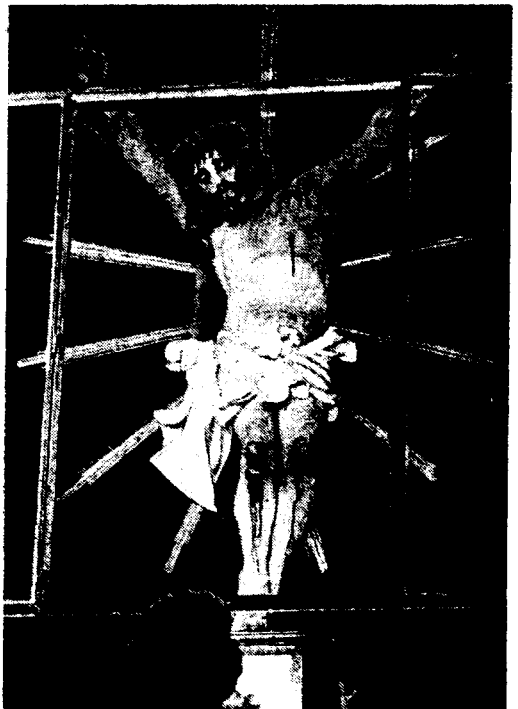
Fortean Times Poster.

To help publicise FT, especially in bookshops, and to establish the name-change, we commissioned a 4-colour silk-screened poster from Hunt Emerson...and a glance at our heading artwork will tell you what to expect. We had a few extra printed off to sell to readers as a way of raising some cash. They will cost £1.00 / \$2.00 including surface post. Anyone donating more than this sum will receive one as a matter of course. Spread the word - it'll soon be a collector's item.

MIRACLES, cont...

and the subsequent medical reports which showed the remarkable improvements or complete cures believed to have been affected by a prayer before the bleeding Christ. Other reports refer to a British diplomat cured of heart disease, and a cocaine addict relieved of his need. For details see the National Enquirer 3 Feb 76, and Sunday People 11 Jan 76. Cr: Ivan Bunn & Nigel Watson.

We have only these news reports to hand and they are vague on several points: eg we would be interested to know if the statue is bleeding from the stigmata, or just the knees as the photo below shows; and whether the blood is applied as a curative agent at all, or is the miracle by power of prayer alone without contact? The People mention an analysis of the blood ("Analysis No 4380/68" sic) but it is not said by which laboratory. Its conclusion reads: "The tests and research proved that the substance really was blood, the origin and species of which are beyond our technical knowledge." The Enquirer quotes a "respected Brazilian physician"-Dr Enias Heringer - that the substance was "undoubtedly pure blood." Archbishop Moraes, of Nit-erol, the capital of Rio state, whose commission presumably initiated these tests, told the Enquirer that a second doctor "confirmed that the 'liquid was human blood.'"



The miracle cures, it seems, date from the day following the appearance of the blood when a villager claimed to be cured of a heart complaint. There is no doubt in the minds of most of the doctors that something inexplicable is happening. The Archbishop is sure that these are miracles and due to the power of the "Blood of Christ", and is ready to recommend to Rome that Porto das Caixas be designated a holy site. But others cannot wait - see the People for an account of the increasing waves of pilgrims.

Two Tomb Cures.

Quoting a middle-eastern paper, L'Orient, the Express & Star, 19 May 1967, reports the claim of a 30-yr-old woman cured of paralysis at the tomb of Father Cherbai in the mountain-top convent of Annaya, north of Beirut. Jeanette Howard said she was praying before the tomb, when the side of it opened and a thin trickle of blood appeared. Suddenly she felt the paralysis leave her left side, and she was cured. (cr: Anthony Smith.)

11-yr-old Lorella Colangelo was paralysed, in the grip of leukoencephalitis which attacks the brain. On 23 June 75, her family took her on a pilgrimage to the shrine of St Gabriel, near Florence, against the advice of the head of the neurology dept. of Ancona Civil Hospital, where Lorella had been languishing. Lorella's father said: "I carried her inside the sanctuary and laid her on the tomb of St Gabriel. Almost at once Lorella fell into a deep sleep. We prayed on our knees, watching her. Fifteen minutes went by like an eternity. Then, suddenly, I saw (her) get up on her feet, climb over the three-foot railing surrounding the tomb, and run toward us...it's a miracle!" Lorella says that the saint had appeared to her in dreams on seven consecutive nights, urging her to come to the sanctuary and be healed. Her mother said: "I was skeptical, even though we are religious...but when she had the same dream seven nights in a row, that finally convinced us." Lorella continued: "I fell asleep on the tomb and St Gabriel appeared in a dream, and told me, 'Get up and walk'. And when I woke, I did." Her doctor affirms the cure with his records of brain scans before and after the miracle. The astonished Dr Primo Angeleri, of the Ancona Hospital, had to accept the evidence of his eyes: "Medical science did not heal her; something else did." National Enquirer 11 Nov 75; Reveille 21 Nov 75 (Cr: Anthony Smith).

Good Lourdes.

Mrs Josephine Hoare, 28, claimed that a trip to Lourdes cured her of chronic nephritis, a severe kidney disease - doctors only gave her two years to live. When she came back from Lourdes, the doctors admitted the disease had become dormant, and warned

her never to have a baby in case the disease was again activated, almost certainly, to claim her life. Nevertheless she did, and according to the Sunday Mercury 30 Dec 73, both mother and baby were doing well. Again Mrs Hoare claimed divine intercession - the doctors, just as certainly, were confounded.

Glove gets Big Hand.

Friends of Lady Armstrong, wife of the 3rd baron and insurance magnate, Lord Armstrong, have nothing but praise for a relic of the Italian-born Lady's ancestor, that has cured many of them. It is a red glove that once belonged to her great-great-uncle, Cardinal Guiseppe Dusmet Desmours, who died in Sicily 90 years ago, and whenever she hears of a friend's illness, Lady Armstrong snips off a piece of material to send to them. "I was terribly ill with cancer some years ago," she says, "and I recovered. A friend of mine - I won't give his name, but he was well-known 25 years ago - had a terrible accident and ^{was} completely paralysed. I gave him a piece of the glove and two months later he began to walk. The stories I could tell are endless...I know of so many instances where the person has recovered." She admits she believes in miracles, and that her husband doesn't - he claims they all would have recovered anyway. She adds: "The cardinal was a very good man and had extraordinary powers. He has already been beatified, and I hope that soon he will be sanctified by the Vatican." Sunday Express 31 March 74.

A Miracle in Glasgow.

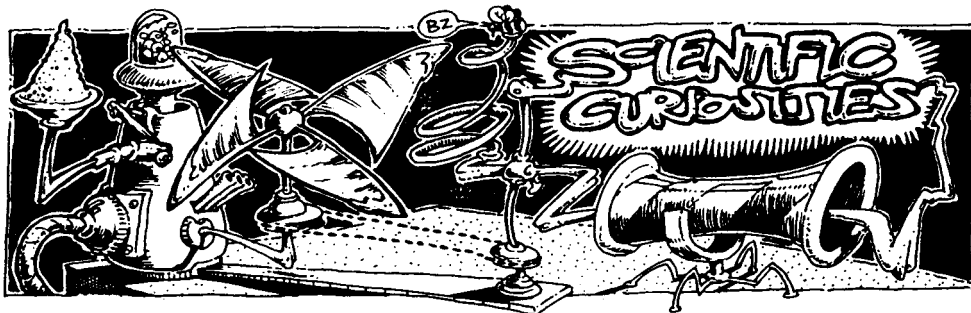
A few days ago as I type this, the Pope formally announced the canonisation of the Blessed John Ogilvie, who died on a scaffold in Glasgow in 1615, for preaching Catholicism in Scotland. Only two months before this, the papers were full of the miraculous cure of John Fagan who had prayed for the intercession of Blessed John, and this miracle, officially ratified by the Pope in February, was given as evidence for the canonisation process. The miracle actually happened 9 years earlier, when John Fagan was reduced to an emaciated skeleton by cancerous tumours in his stomach and colon. He was given last rites 3 times, and just when he thought his suffering was over "I felt that once again I had got the will to live." He called out to his wife for a boiled egg (the first food he had eaten for several weeks) and steadily improved from then - he even went back to work in the docks before he was made redundant there. Local priests, who were appointed 'Devil's Advocate' were charged to find any basis for a natural explanation - but when faced with the medical evidence from before and after the miraculous cure (which happened on 4 March 1967) they had to admit "there was no clinical or radiological evidence of res-

idual disease" and concluded "There was no natural explanation." Experts said it was nothing more than a spontaneous remission, of which there are many - but they would be the first to admit they are baffled by such cases and, as one specialist noted, had no record before of any spontaneous remission of colon or stomach cancer. See most national papers of 12-14 March 76. Cr: S Moore, P Rogerson & Tony Roberts.

...And Italy, again...

Two years ago, Elena Budelacci suffered

from insipid diabetes and paralysis of her lower body - her muscles had atrophied after 20 bedridden years and her bones were decalcified so that she could not sit, let alone walk. On 2 May 1974 she was taken to the shrine of the Madonna at Lareto, on the Adriatic coast, and today 36-yr-old Elena can walk again, as her amazed doctor puts it: "as if she had never been sick a day...the spring in her step is that of a little girl." National Enquirer 6 April 76.



LIGHT WORK...

Everlasting lightbulbs are one of those dreams along with electric nose-pickers and something-for-nothing machines that galvanise inventors into perpetual motion. One can easily imagine how this might relate to tales in the classical mythologies of perpetually burning lamps as a recurring archetype. But the matter to hand is the announcement of the development of long-life bulbs, or rather two announcements within 2 months of each other.

Firstly, Donald Hollister of Lighting Technology Corp., released news of their new bulb that consumes 70% less electricity and could burn for up to 10 years; and the US Research and Development Administration plan to produce it as soon as possible. South China Morning Post 10 March 76 - Credit: Ion Will.

According to New Scientist 29 April 76, Philips Research Laboratories are developing fluorescent tubes filled with glass-fibre... which nearly doubles the light output and consumes about a third as much electricity as the ordinary incandescent equivalent.

Back in the good ole days, John Campbell (of Analog) used to rant against the giant monopolies that buy up neat ideas like the everlasting razorblade or longlife battery only to sit on them. It seems it's taken the great energy crisis to create enough of a commercial market for such things. Let's hope some good will come of it. (I meant, of course monopolies, but what the hell...)

However neither of these announcements cuts much cake with us Fortean. We remember the lightbulb in the Old Byers Opera House

in Fort Worth, Texas, which was put in on 21 Sept 1908, and was never switched off. INFO Journal 8 p9 prints a note from an unidentified newspaper dated 27 May 1969, to the effect that the bulb was still going. It's career was vouched for by OC Carlson, VP of Texas Electric Service, who had kept tabs on it for 40 years, and confessed to being mystified by the phenomenon. The last note we have on it is a sad one. It seems that in November 1974, the Opera House was closed, and concern over the bulb, understandably something of a celebrity around the old 'Cowtown USA', was noised publicly. Daily Mail 26 November 74 - Cr: Steev Moore. Perhaps one of our readers knows what happened next; we have a vague recollection of hearing a radio story that the bulb was finally switched off and auctioned, and the building demolished - a sad end to 66yrs 6mths as a shining example.

"When it's steamengine time..."

A mysterious inventor from Los Angeles, 61-yr-old Sam Leach, has sold "automotive" and "residential application" rights for a cool \$million to two Californian companies, in his suitcase-sized device for producing combustible hydrogen from tap water "without any continuous outside energy source". Newsweek 19 April 76 says that if the device works it could be the answer to the dream of "an unlimited supply of clean energy for homes, autos and industry at practically no cost." If it doesn't, it could be the biggest bilking this century. When rumours of the purchase of

these rights began to circulate, stock in both companies shot up - in fact so high and fast the Securities and Exchange Commission stopped their trading and launched an investigation into the possibility of stock manipulation and other security-law violations. It is expected that the SEC investigation will also clear up doubt about the device.

Leach says the process is simple - an electric charge is passed through the water to split it, and an "unidentified reactant metal" absorbs the oxygen in such a way as to leave combustible hydrogen. Once started the process runs on its own heat - a statement that had a hydrogen expert at UCLA saying it was impossible because it violates two of the laws of thermodynamics. Needless to say developments are being awaited in more than one camp with baited breath. (Cr: Ion Will).

The steam-engine effect never ceases to amaze us - just a few days before the above story, the UK Ministry of Defence squashed another story of a mystery magic metal, this time in Wales. Arthur Adams, a retired ultrasonics engineer from Ipswich, said he had discovered a strange metal which could provide endless supplies of cheap electricity. He found a silver-grey nugget in a gold-bearing deposit on a mountain near the Mawddach Estuary, North Wales. A piece the size of a button, he claims, could power a car, and a slab the size of a shoe-box could supply all the power and light for a family for next to nothing. "You can connect pieces of the metal in series and get as much power as you like. Believe me, this is very big indeed. It can produce a limitless supply of power. It gives off huge voltages and amps, and is self-regenerating.

What is more, Mr Adams claims to have synthesised the metal himself, and it was through filing patents and a trade-name that the MOD came to hear of it. The Patents Office say it is standard practice to refer all patents of "defence interest" to the MOD. Mr Adams received a letter from the MOD warning him under Section 18 of the Official Secrets Act (ie publication of inventions likely to be prejudicial to the defence of the realm) not to release details of the components of the substance, nor its location.

Mr Adams, a prospecting specialist, had been out testing a detector of his own design in this mineral-rich region of Wales, when it went haywire. He dug and found the metal, which he sent to London for analysis. "The metal is self-regenerating," he said. "It shouldn't be, but then it does a lot of things it shouldn't according to known scientific laws... This substance is a combination of natural elements in a hitherto undiscovered form and which could have taken tens of thousands of years to discover scientifically... This energy source is like a huge natural battery in the earth - and it has nothing to

do with the fusion of zinc and copper."

Naturally the protests of experts have provided some amusement. Officials of the Institute of Geological Scientists, who of course know every mineral in these isles, said: "We have not discovered any minerals with these properties. If it is a substance unknown to science it is extremely exciting - but we doubt it." We remember hearing on radio and TV quotes peppered with the word "impossible". But Arthur Adams knows - he had already had clocks, a radio, a portable TV, motor and lightbulb running off his metal.

How can any government justify keeping the people who elect it in energy-poverty if this is true? Surely the crisis, and the grave doubts over our future, demand a rethink of the very sort of bureaucratic madness that will damn us all? Mr Adams has doubts over this censure too: "I'm a bit worried that people with vested interests will try to prevent this potential from being exploited." Hmmm - I wonder if we can induce Mr Adams to market his special detector. Let's have a new California or Alaska in Wales! Story taken from Yorkshire Evening Post 7 & 8 April 76, & Daily Express 10 April 76 - Cr: Anthony Bell & Steev Moore.

Legacy of the Mad Scientist.

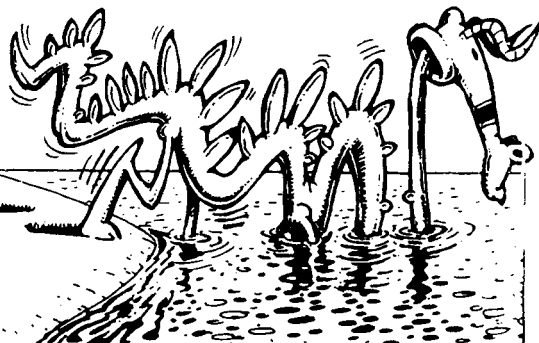
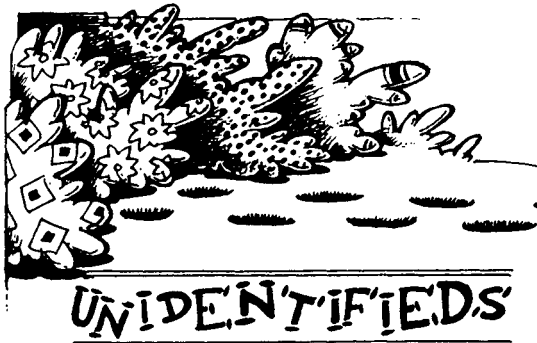
When the Daily Mirror published its Little Black Book (Wolfe, 1975) a correspondence ensued in the Mirror's letter column about Britain's classic mad scientist, Harry Grindell-Matthews, which in turn suggested a solution to one item of enigmatic data in our files. But first some background. Grindell-Matthews was born in 1880, and after fighting in the Boer War, withdrew to a laboratory in remote Welsh mountains where he experimented with the new science of radio telephony. His contribution to the First World War was a remote-controlled gun-boat that homed in on a light beam. In 1924 he was rumoured to have invented a death-ray that could "stop a motor, kill plant life, destroy vermin, explode gunpowder, fire cartridges and light lamps". (See also Fort's comments on G-M's death-ray in The Hooks p956; Wild Talents ch17). In 1930 he demonstrated his "sky-projector", startling the inhabitants of Hampstead Heath with a vision of a voluptuous angel projected onto a cloud, dissolving into the words "A Happy Christmas". In New York he shone the Stars & Stripes onto clouds. In 1938 he married a Polish widow, reputedly worth £25 million, and began work on submarine detection.

The point of all this is that in 1935 he developed what he called "aerial torpedoes" or "aerial mines" which were clutches of bombs suspended on wires from parachutes, and fired as a sort of multiple warhead into the sky by rockets. The correspondence in the Daily Mirror (10, 24, & 25 Nov; 9, 13 & 15 Dec 75) was largely reminiscences of the men

who manned the rocket-firing stations (called Unrifled Projectors, or Parachute & Cables) in the latter days of the Second World War, and they tell of such disasters as the things blowing up in the launchers, or masses of these aerial mines drifting back inland (over Dover, for example) if the wind changed. But by all accounts they worked well: the wires could cause a sudden 1 ton drag on the planes, snapping off wings; or would catch and slide the bomb up to explode on contact. They were defeated only by the Germans putting blades on the leading wing edges.

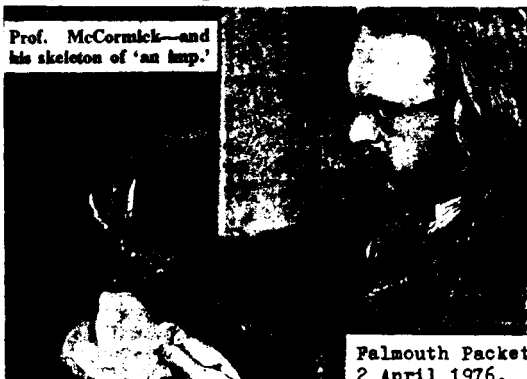
Stick with me - I'm getting warmer. Brad Steiger never tires of mentioning one of his favourite data : "On Feb 7, 1958, an artillery shell fell from a clear sky over Naples, Italy, and clanged loudly as it struck the street. The shell casing bore the date 1942." (of Mysteries of Time & Space; Prentice Hall; 1974; p66). The suggestion is that it had been fired during the war, vanished into some space-time limbo, and dropped out again in 1958 - interesting, but contentious. Now, (he says with a grand flourish) I may have

something even more interesting. Grindell-Matthews' 'aerial mines' were in use (as far as I can tell) most frequently from 1940-42, and as far afield as Tobruk, Crete, Malta and perhaps even Italy. I had filed away in my 'Falls' box an item that appeared in the Sunday People and Sunday Express 11 March 1956 (Cr: Harold SW Chibett), to the effect that (presumably the day before) a man working in his garden in Athelstan Rd, Bitterne, near Southampton, looked up to see a 5ft cylinder on an unopened parachute, and trailing wires dropping out of the clear sky towards him. Edward Garnham said: "It exploded twice in mid-air, dived toward my house and hit the ground where it exploded in flames, wrecking my garden and greenhouse." Police investigation established that it was a war-time defence device, of the 'aerial mine' sort and made in 1942. "Where," they ask in all reasonableness, "had it come from?" Wherever, we reply in all helpfulness, it had been since it was fired into the air between 1942-5, and for nearly a year less than Steiger's shell.



More Cornish Capers.

Our Cornish correspondent, Doc Shiels, The Wizard of the West, has been keeping us up to date with developments on the monster front down there, and credit for most of the following news items goes to him.



Falmouth Packet
2 April 1976.

At the end of March Doc was joined in his hunt for Morgawr, the dragon (see last issue p13ff) by Mike McCormick, a "professor of metaphysics" who lectures on monsters, owns a 'Matchbox Circus' and eats fire. McCormick was soon telling the press that Morgawr could change size at will, and the plan was to use Doc's telepathic powers to lure the monster from its lair, and capture it when it was about 30ins long -- see the Falmouth Packet for 2 April, and the West Briton 25 & 30 March, for further publicity (and for those interested, McCormick unveiled one of his collection of monsters, being the "skeleton of an imp" complete with horns and wings on its 18ins blackened smelly frame.)

Let me just add that through correspondence with Doc, I've found him to be well-read, aware and intelligent about monsters. He has a pretty good idea of what he is doing and clearly understands that the ballyhoo he has been involved in had a specific purpose: as a professional magician it was good PR,

and in the popular imagination created a role for himself that led to him being approached many times with information that was not given to the press. Beneath the song-and-dance, he has a genuine interest in strange phenomena, and as he says, being a stage magician is an acceptable vehicle for an interest in the real thing. His other motive, and one we as Porteans applaud was to provide a counterpoint to what he has described to me as a tense and even frightening atmosphere there (with UFOs, monsters, alleged photos of fairies which Doc has forwarded to us and which we are having examined by Kodak, and finally, a 'mothman' right out of one of John Keel's nightmares).

However...as events approached April 1st, the inevitable happened and a giant 3-humped long-necked 20ft red and green monster came out of the Penryn River, near Falmouth, at 9.30 on Fool's Day, suspiciously following the trawler 'No No'. People waved from the piers, ships hooted their welcome, and the Falmouth Pilot's cutter nosed around suspiciously. It was believed the spectacle (photos in the Packet 2 April) were laid on by the editor of the Packet.

Another Photo...

The Packet for 9th April, contains a letter from Peter Costello, author of In Search of Lake Monsters, who said: "There is no doubt in my mind (sea and lake monsters) exist". He calls Mary F's photos (see last issue) the "first ones of a sea serpent...ever published" and pleads with Mary F to get in touch with him - not even the Packet editor knew her address. But alas, Costello's plea was too late - a letter from Mary F appeared just 15 days earlier (26 March) in that paper saying "My brother has just sold the negatives for me to an American gentleman." Doc told me that he didn't know who that was; McCormick didn't have them. In a letter dated 23 April, Doc told me he was at one of his "observation posts" on the Helford River, when he was approached by a schoolboy called Andrew ("I don't know his address. He wouldn't give it - said his father would be angry!!") who showed him a large photo-print of what he claimed was Morgawr swimming between Toll-point and The Gew, on the river. Doc sent me the photo, but it was too blurred to print, but contained suggestive shapes thus:



It didn't look very convincing to me, but who knows? I had to send it back to Doc without being able to copy it. It was, apparently, shown on BBC 'Spotlight SW' on 22 April.

More Sightings...

The Packet for 9 April also contained a strange letter from John J Bickenson of Hornsea: "In 1936 I was strolling along Castle

Beach, when to my utter amazement I saw thousands of limpets detach themselves from the rocks and attach themselves to a huge piece of floating sea-weed. I was astounded to see that on the other end of the sea-weed were thousands of winkles. There ensued a 'tug-of-war' ending in the whole disappearing about 2 miles offshore. I did photograph this, but had no film in my camera."-!!!- sounds like the sort of joke-letter that is the bane of Porteans who optimistically believe that any damned-thing is possible...limpets swim?... anyway it hardly clears up the Morgawr mystery as JJB claims it does. Hmm, Doc mentioned being plagued by MIB journalists...so why not MIB letter-writers too?

The Packet for the 16th April, has a letter from Miss M Jenkins: "A friend of mine confided to me some years ago that she had seen a large snake-like creature swimming in the sea at Mylor. In turn this reminded me of a report in a national newspaper, about 1934, concerning local fishermen seeing a monster at sea. A gentleman who encountered the creature suggested it was 25 to 30ft long."

The latest sighting to hand suggests there may even be more than one monster. In the Packet, 14 May, is the story of two young bankers from London, on holiday in Falmouth. The men, Tony Rogers and John Chambers, were fishing, at 10.15am, 4th May, from the rocks at Parson's Beach at the mouth of the Helford River (the scene of the schoolboy's photo) and both "insisted they had no prior knowledge of its alleged existence." Rogers said: "Suddenly, something rose out of the water, about 150 or 200 yards away. It was greeny-grey in colour and appeared to have humps. Another, smaller one, also appeared. They were visible for about ten seconds and looked straight at us." Chambers said he didn't see the smaller creature, and that had he been on his own, would have thought he was going mad. "Perhaps a bull and his cow, or a cow and her calf," as Costello writes in his book, of an old monster photo from elsewhere?

More Helford Hi-jinks...

Doc had told me sometime previously that two, perhaps three, witches would be attempting to summon the beast by swimming nude in the Helford estuary. The press too, keenly awaited the event, not least because Psyche (from Inverness), Vivienne (from London), and Amanda (a Cornish lass) were all described as young and beautiful. The whole Cornish monster saga was in fact written up for Reveille by Frank Durham, who insisted on calling the monster 'Fessie' -- the splendidly archaic 'Morgawr' is Cornish for 'sea-giant'. In Durham's piece, Doc is quoted as having watched Psyche swim, then two days later, both Psyche and Vivienne: "Both girls said an incantation - Psyche, in Gaelic." Later, Vivienne wrote to the Packet: "I swam,

sky-clad, in the name of Cernunnos. I called up the creature and felt its presence." But Doc saw nothing...or nothing materialised.

Precursors at Falmouth...

The West Briton 13 May, digs up a report from its own pages, "100 years ago" -- "Mr Botisto sends us the following from Port-scatho: 'The sea serpent was caught alive in Gerrans Bay. Two of our fishermen were afloat overhauling their crab-pots, about 4-500 yards from the shore when they discovered the serpent coiled about their floating cork (buoy). Upon their near approach it lifted its head and showed signs of defiance, upon which they struck it forcibly with an oar, which so far disabled it as to allow them to proceed with their work, after which they observed the serpent floating about near the boat. They pursued it, bringing it ashore yet alive for exhibition, soon after which it was killed on the rocks and most inconsiderately cast again into the sea.'" Sounds to us more like an ancestor of Miss Jenkins' snake-like creature, than one of Morgawr's family.

Perhaps we can do slightly better -- the following is a footnote to a mention of Irish lake-monsters by Harold T Wilkins:

"Myself, and another man, saw, on Tuesday 5 July 1949, at 11.30am...two remarkable saurians, 19-20 feet long, with bottle green heads, one behind the other, their middle parts under the water of the tidal creek of East Looe, Cornwall, apparently chasing a shoal of fish up the creek. What was amazing were their dorsal parts: ridged, serrated, and like the old Chinese pictures of dragons. Gulls swooped down towards the one in the rear, which had a large piece of orange peel on his dorsal parts. These monsters - and two of us saw them - resembled the plesio-saurus of Mesozoic times. Unfortunately I had left my camera behind. It is futile to report such phenomena to marine biological stations. ...A young news editor of the Daily Mail promised to investigate this, but did not do so." cf Strange Mysteries of Time & Space (Ace pb; 1958; Ch 10; p196) - undelinings mine.

...And at Barmouth.

Another interesting point made by Wilkins is that "In that month of 1949, the Gulf Stream showed an aberration from its normal course; so that fishermen at Mewagissy, not far away, were scared when they netted a 20ft long tropical turtle." (ibid). Could the creatures seen in the same area today be giant turtles? Can anyone help us by checking on any perturbations of the Gulf Stream over the last couple of years?

This brought to mind a passage in Colin Palmer's letter to me about the Barmouth Monster (see News 10/18f; 15/12f): "The untimely appearance of a large leathery backed turtle (given national coverage) in Cardigan

Bay, and another one in the North-west of England, seemed to be the answer to all "this monster nonsense". Hmmm...so we went digging in the files and found a note from the Daily Mirror 16 Sept 75 - that a 7ft leather-backed turtle, weighing half a ton, was picked up by a Scottish trawler; doesn't say where, but the North Sea is implicated, which is a strange place for the Gulf Stream to stream. But no notes on the Cardigan Bay turtle.

cont on p21...

The 'Mothman' at Mawnan.

In Doc's letter, dated 27 April, he says: "A very weird thing happened over the Easter weekend. A holidaymaker from Preston, Lancs., told me about something his two young daughters had seen...a big feathered bird-man, hovering over the church tower at Mawnan (a village near the mouth of the Helford River). The girls (June, 12, and Vicky, 9, daughters of Mr Don Melling), were so scared that the family cut their holiday short and went back three days early. This really is a fantastic thing, and I'm sure the man wasn't just making it up because he'd been told I was on a monster hunt. I couldn't get the kids to talk about it (in fact, their father wouldn't let me try), but he gave me a sketch of the thing, drawn by June, a copy of which I enclose." (The copy was too large to fit here so your editor has redrawn it, faithfully.)



Mawnan 'Bird-man' witnessed by June Melling 17 April (Easter Saturday) 76; (based on a sketch made by her the same day: DS/RJMR).

Doc continues: "There have been no reports so far as I know, of anyone else seeing the bird-man...even if it turned out to be just a fancy-dress hang-glider, you'd think someone else would have spotted him...But Mawnan is not a place for hang-gliding! I really don't know what to think...it's as if a whole load of weirdness has been let loose in the Falmouth area since last Autumn..."

LEYS, UFOs and CHANCE

A reply to FWHoliday by Robert Forrest

Mr Holiday seems to suggest, in the final paragraph of his article (7) that my chance UFO-ley study (2) argued why UFOs would not appear on his Pembrokeshire triangle. What my article did in fact show was that under certain conditions, a strikingly high correlation would appear to exist, completely by chance alone between UFO sightings and alignments of ancient sites. Or in short, why UFOs would appear to be associated with leys rather than why they would not,

The article was based on a statistical study which showed that in many regions the 'ley line density' was so high that it would be possible to find at least one ley line passing through virtually any point on the map. This of course implies that chance effects could account for not only the UFO-ley link, but the puma-ley link as well, not to mention the curious phenomenon of 'subconscious sitting' on leys of many entirely modern churches. (3)

* * * * *

Mr Holiday claims, quite rightly, that if leys do not exist then "the critics have an awful lot of aligned tumuli to get rid of".

In the first section of my booklet, from which my last article was extracted, I claim to have shown statistically that in fact chance alignments are extremely numerous - far more numerous than most ley hunters seem to believe.

Let me take an example from Mr Holiday's area of study. An analysis of the upper half (the lower half is largely sea) of sheet 158 of the new 1:50,000 OS map series, contains 130 tumuli, burial chambers, forts etc., and 135 churches. I did not count hill-peaks, as most are rather ill-defined and difficult to deal with mathematically. However it is clear that even more alignments can be expected if hill-peaks (plus other items such as coastal promontories) are counted, than can be expected if only churches and assorted ancient monuments are counted. Let us therefore consider simple church/ancient monument alignments, and bear in mind the fact that these can be 'filled out' with hill-peaks, etc.

Now supposing half the churches on our section of sheet 158 are non-valid as ley-points, and are therefore to be discounted. We are left with a total of about 200 valid ley-points on the map, and from 200 points in such an area we can expect (4):

144 alignments of 4 points
10 "- "- 5 "-
1 "- "- 6 "-

these being to an alignment limit of $\frac{1}{3}$ mm on a 1:50,000 scale map (ie. a ley-point is to be counted as on a line if its centre lies within $\frac{1}{3}$ mm of that line).

This is certainly quite a number of chance alignments, and if the alignment limit be relaxed to $\pm \frac{1}{2}$ mm we can expect even more; thus:

284 alignments of 4 points
30 "- "- 5 "-
3 "- "- 6 "-

plus a chance of 1 in 4 of finding an alignment of 7 points.

Mr Holiday is therefore working in a relatively densely populated region, though by no means as dense as some regions of the British Isles, eg Salisbury Plain eastwards to the heart of the ley-following UFO country, Warminster, where 'leys' of order 8, 9 and above can be expected by chance on a single map, and where the number of chance alignments of 4, 5 or even 6 is so colossal as to render their evidential value to the ley hypothesis virtually nil.

Incidentally, for the upper half of sheet 158, calculation shows that on average one ley will pass through any given UFO, puma or elemental sighting, hospital, pub or post office.

* * * * *

My previous article concerned UFOs and their apparent association with what might be called non-specific ley systems - ie ley systems which delineate no specific geometric configuration. I simply showed in that article that under certain conditions there was a high likelihood of finding an alignment of ancient points passing through a given UFO

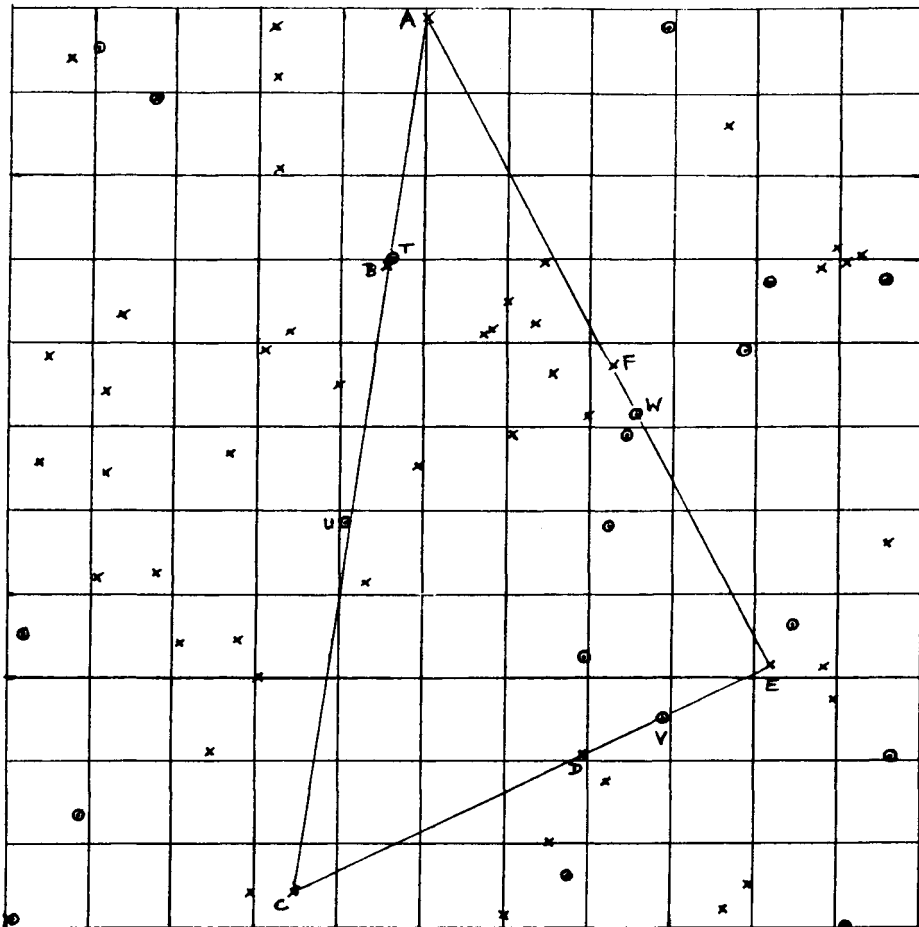


Fig 1 UFO-Ley Simulation Diagram (repeated from News 13),

All pseudo-leys have been erased except those which delineate a triangulation with attendant UFOs. Key: X = ley point. O = UFO.

Barmouth Precursor, cont...

Steev Moore sent notes from the Daily Mirror & Daily Express 30 July 75 - that a crocodile was seen basking on a sandbank at the mouth of the Stour, Sandwich Bay, Kent. Again the value of coverage is shown - the Express item adds that the croc was 6ft long, and that a Dover council official said there had been "no other reports." Another mal-observed turtle, or 'dragon'? Further clippings from this period would be welcome.

But back to precursors...and this time we find a snake-like thing, rather than a dragon, in the area of the Barmouth Monster. Heuvelmans, in his In the Wake of the Sea-serpents

(1968; p116f) quotes an incident from George Borrow's ramblings in Wild Wales (1862). Borrow heard some Welshmen arguing over the existence of the sea-serpent in a tavern in Port Dyn Norwig, and tells them a story that he read in an old Welsh book, called The Greal ((shades of Machen's The Great Return)) in which a large snake-like sea-serpent chased a ship in the Menai Straits, in October 1805, and it crawled up the tiller-hole and coiled itself (like the Gerran Bay serpent) around the mast. The sailors attacked it and drove it overboard, and it followed them until a wind sprang up and it was lost.

sighting, and frequently more than one such alignment. Mr Holiday has not explained how six random, non-existent UFOs in the Chilterns came to possess the same ley affinity as the soundless, translucent UFO he saw back in 1966. He has simply added a new element to the game - namely ley-triangulation.

Now it is possible to show that such ley-triangulation as that on News 14/9 is not an uncommon chance configuration, and I will forward a copy of my results on this to Mr Holiday as soon as it is ready. What has yet to be decided, given the expected number of chance ley-triangulations, is what proportion of UFOs (or fire-balls) would appear to have an affinity with such configurations. This is no easy task - certainly not as easy as it is with non-specific ley systems - but upon looking over my ley-UFO simulation diagram in News 13, I was gratified to find in the midst of it, a very telling chance configuration, comparable to the antics of my non-existent Chiltern UFOs.

The diagram is reproduced here (fig 1), but with the majority of the 'leys' erased to pick out the relevant details. The reader can see how this totally chance simulation reproduces closely the effect illustrated by Mr Holiday's diagram on News 14/9 - namely a 'ley triangulation with no less than 4 attendant 'UFOs'.

Let me emphasise again that this figure represents an imaginary (randomly simulated) ley-landscape, with imaginary UFOs on it. Yet it demonstrates the same phenomenon Mr Holiday claims to have found in South Wales. The reader must draw his own conclusions from this, but to my mind, if these effects can happen by chance on graph paper, they can just as easily happen on Mr Holiday's maps, or for that matter, over the actual landscape of South Wales.

* * * * * * * * *

Finally we come to the 8:15:17 triangle, which first appeared in Mr Holiday's book The Dragon and the Disc p147, though without the 8:15:17 stipulation. The fact that the triangle might be 8:15:17 was first suggested by myself in a letter to Mr Holiday (dated 3/9/1975), based on measurements from the diagram in his book, and was therefore suggested with extreme caution as to its limits of accuracy. Map inspection reveals that my stress on caution was well founded, for although the triangle might be 8:15:17 in proportion, it might equally be several other things, for example a chance effect which can all too easily be made to appear what it equally easily is not, by judicious jugglery of ruler and map. I am not accusing Mr Holiday of 'forgery' in any way - I am sure that he is sincere in his belief that this triangle is meant to be Pythagorean. But what I am saying is that the structure of this triangle is so

loosely defined as to reduce its evidential value to a rather low level, to one not already converted to Mr Holiday's theories.

To begin with, the raths which mark the Northerly and Westerly corners of the triangle are rather ill-defined on the map (1:50,000 OS sheet 157). Further, although Mr Holiday labels the Southerly corner "Kilpaison Tumuli", and though there are about ten of these tumuli, it is doubtful whether any one of them actually marks the southern vertex. In answer to my query "Which one?", he implied that it wasn't actually a particular barrow of the group, but a point on the periphery of the group (letter dated 11/9/75).

The result of this vagueness of location of the triangle's corners is that the angle claimed by Mr Holiday as a right angle, could be anything from 86 to 91 degrees. Such a five degree spread of error throws considerable doubt on the proceedings, since given the same allowable error, I could claim points C and E in fig.1 to be raths and thus make my 'ley-triangulation' into a perfectly respectable 3:4:5 Pythagorean Triangle!

However, suppose Mr Holiday's Pembroke-shire Triangle is a bona fide 8:15:17 triangle. Is it necessarily the design of some ancient architect, or could it still be simply a chance effect?

Strikingly similar effects can be seen to be delineated by alignments of ordinary buildings, pubs, farmhouses and natural landmarks etc., which have nothing to do with the conventional ley system (though I note Mr Holiday's comments in The Dragon and the Disc p153-4). One such example is shown here (fig 2), being a 3:4:5 triangle in the same area as Mr Holiday's 8:15:17.

Are we to believe then that some subconscious magical drive leads farmers to build their farmhouses, and breweries their pubs, so as to map out giant Pythagorean Triangles over the landscape; or are we to believe that the thing is a chance effect? Personally I believe the latter.

Mr Holiday claims the support of Professor Thom for the ancient use of at least three Pythagorean Triangles. But let us be quite clear about this. Professor Thom only claimed their use within individual stone circles of the egg-shaped (I & II) and elliptical types (5), whereas Mr Holiday's triangles concern juxtapositions of distinct monuments. These are two quite different concepts, as Mr Holiday has agreed (letter dated 22/8/75). The fact that Thom's work is valid, therefore, does not necessarily lend support to Mr Holiday's assertions.

By chance alone many elaborate patterns of juxtapositions are to be expected. A prime example of this is Major Tyler's concentric circular distributions of ancient monuments surrounding Stonehenge (6). Statistical analysis, backed by random simulation, reveals

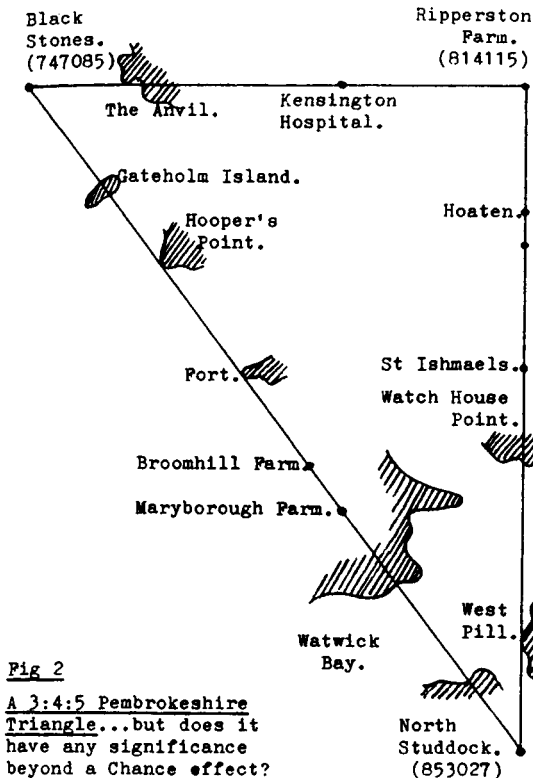


Fig 2

A 3:4:5 Pembrokeshire Triangle...but does it have any significance beyond a Chance effect?

that chance can quite easily reproduce Major Tyler's arrangements. Anyone who is interested can write to me at: 68 Chesham Rd, Bury, Lancs, for further details.

*** Robert Forrest; February 1976***

Notes:

- 1) 'Leys and those Whatsits'- FW Holiday. The News 14/9-10.
- 2) 'Leys, UFOs & Chance'- R Forrest. The News 13/12-13.
- 3) See, for example Janet Bord's article in The News 7, and Phil Grant's article in The News 3; also FW Holiday's The Dragon & the Disc pp153-4, and Phil Grant's article in The Ley Hunter 50.
- 4) "The figures I originally gave were calculated using the Furness Formula from Paul Screeton's Quicksilver Heritage pp57-8, or rather a suped up version of it. I now have reason to believe that there is a flaw in the Furness Formula - not in my suping-up, I hasten to add, but in the original as in Screeton...Chris Hutton Squire (of Under-currents) still holds that the Furness F. is correct, and would therefore defend the figures I give in the original version of (this) reply to FWH. A battle of computers is in progress at the moment over this formula -

computers, since the point at issue involves literally millions of calculations to sort out. If I am right and the Furness F. does have a flaw, the figures (I originally gave) are unfairly high...Now there is a formula which predicts deliberately low results, and in view of the possible error in Furness, I would prefer to publish in (Fortean Times) 'low' rather than 'high' results for chance alignments." Letter from RF to the Editor dated 18 April 76. The 'low' figures have been inserted into the article in place of the 'high' Furness expectations as requested -- Ed.

5) Megalithic Sites in Britain - Prof. A Thom; pp29-31.

6) The Geometrical Arrangement of Ancient Sites - Major FC Tyler; p36.

*** * * * *

Ed's Note: Robert Forrest and PW Holiday have between them raised some interesting issues about leys. Many people, and your ed. among them, feel, instinctively, that there is some significance to ley alignment - but vague feelings are clearly not enough for serious study. Rob Forrest's work should not be interpreted as an attack on the idea, but rather a critical appraisal of methodology. On that basis, it seems, one cannot substantiate the existence of leys by appealing to alignments of points significantly higher than can be accounted for by Chance alone. As Rob shows, this is simply not the case, even with low-yield formulas. So anyone wishing to establish the existence of leys must invoke other and more substantial arguments, and for an exposition of these, I refer the reader to Paul Screeton's Quicksilver Heritage (Thorsons; 1974; £4.50). However, paperwork is no substitute for fieldwork. Single lines of thought, or single facts, can always be demolished - this is how the establishment reacts. You can see it operating in UFO or monster sightings - singly these things can be discredited. But we are interested in their cumulative effect, and whether these phenomena, leys included, be merely natural effects ordered and given meaning by the will-to-believe, or whether they are demonstrable facets of the physical world, in no way diminishes their 'reality' as ideas. We hope to continue with this debate from time to time; but as the more practical arguments and evidence can be more properly presented by those closer to the whole field of study than we are here, they and the readers are referred to the pages of our sister mag, The Ley Hunter (see our review section). Readers wishing to go deeper into the question of mathematical probability of leys may be interested to know of a postal folio on the subject being circulated privately - please apply to Paul Screeton, c/o TLH. Those wishing to tackle Rob Forrest direct will find his address in his article above -- Editor.



HARDBACKS

Fire From Heaven by Michael Harrison.

(Sidgwick & Jackson; £5.50; pp240; index, bib, photos.) -- Some ideas inevitably

precipitate incomprehension, but mention the subject of spontaneous combustion of humans (SHC) and listen to the din of minds slamming shut. It is a terrifying prospect - you can almost feel the Lovecraftian horror of Charles Dickens' conception: "Call the death by any name Your Highness will, attribute it to whom you will, or say it might have been prevented how you will, it is the same death eternally ...inborn, inbred, engendered in the corrupt humours of the viscous body itself, and that only...Spontaneous Combustion, and none other of all the deaths that can be died." (Bleak House, 1853, ch32.) We are talking about a process that burns quickly, intensely (leaving only cinders and oily smoke), that seems to use a different fuel from ordinary fire (water will not extinguish it), that lulls its victims into trances (like a vampire, mused Fort), that is selective (eg burning the body and not the clothes encasing it), that is peculiarly confined (eg a heat intense enough to carbonise bones, yet leaving easily combustible materials nearby untouched), and so on. It is a 'hell-fire', and one has the suspicion it is the real cause behind the fear of fire. There are no SCs of animals that we know of - man, it seems, has earned its fiery vengeance having enslaved it for millenia. Fire is magically associated with final material dissolution, and in SHC is, in microcosm, a Ragnarok of the guts.

It is one of the many opportunities missed by this book, that apart from a curious diversion into Roman law (lightning victims are not to be picked up "above the knees") there is so little discussion of the powerful yet elusive undercurrent of the mythic in the subject. If I seem harsh or overly critical in my comments, it is because the appearance of a book on one of the central Fortean mysteries is a rare event - and whilst this book will undoubtedly take its place alongside Vincent Gaddis' Mysterious Fires & Lights and Eric Frank Russell's Great World Mysteries on

the Fortean reference shelf, I am sad that the full potential of that opportunity has not been realised.

Harrison's main claim is that he has gathered together most of the known cases of SHC - drawing on and extending the work of Gaddis, Russell, and even Fort (and though Fort is credited with bringing fresh insights into this macabre subject, Harrison tends to see him as little more than a collector of strange stories). Harrison's methodology is not systematic and the book's main fault lies here: it is annoying to find interesting cases without proper or full mention of sources, and he will often quote a case from, say, Gaddis (whilst Gaddis quotes from Fort, and Fort from a contemporary source) without going to the source directly, thereby compounding the likelihood of error. (Indeed this does happen, as we'll see). There was also the opportunity here for a chronological or other listing of known cases -- the only such list known to me is in Ivan Sanderson's Investigating the Unexplained, and that contained the gross error of fragmenting the case of the Countess Cornelia Zangari and Bandi (1731) into two, ie Countess Cornelia Bandi (1763) and Countess Cornelia Zangari (1836) (Appendix A, in Sanderson's book).

Harrison opens with several cases which were in fact cited by Dickens as authorities for his belief in the phenomenon, including the Countess di Bandi case (Harrison quotes the case from Sir David Brewster, and both give no date; yet professing to have investigated Dickens' interest, Harrison seems unaware that the case was often mentioned in The Dickensian, eg., its March 1936 issue reproduces the original testimony of the investigating prebend of Verona.) Readers new to the idea of SHC will be surprised to learn that belief in it was widespread in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. Among the writers of those days who incorporated it into their works are Zola, Marryat, Melville, de Quincey and Charles Brocken Brown - and of course, Dickens. The idea was also a favourite whipping-boy of the textbooks on medical jurisprudence, and forensic toxicology - but it was merely considered as a ploy by murderers who've tried to burn

the evidence, or in terms of strange tissue disorders that give off methane or "phosphor-
 etted hydrogen" gas. It is generally claimed
 that the pioneer chemist, Baron Justus von
 Liebig, settled the matter in his Familiar
Letters on Chemistry (1851) by experiments in
 burning animal tissue (even soaked in alcohol)
 and an examination of some cases - but he,
 like the reviewer of this book in the Daily
Mail 29 April: "refuse to believe that people
 can suddenly catch fire for no reason what-
 ever." Liebig explained in terms of the known
 behaviour of fire under 'normal' conditions -
 today we could investigate on the basis of
 plasma or radiation physics, as in fact, sug-
 gested by Cade and Davis in their Taming of
the Thunderbolts, but not only does Harrison
 not know of their work on the strange effects
 of ball lightning, but does not take the pos-
 sible connexion with SHC up beyond a specula-
 tion in passing. Liebig's demolition job on
 SHC virtually killed off any hope of serious
 research into it overnight. Cases still flared
 up occasionally, and still do, and because
 the medical profession was only too glad to
 forget the subject collectively, each case
 would catch them unawares. Harrison has col-
 lected isolated reports on SHC victims, and
 sporadic correspondence on the subject from
 the pages of the medical journals. It is in-
 teresting to note that Dr Gavin Thurston, who
 personally doesn't believe in SHC but in 'Pre-
 ternatural Combustion', wrote to the British
Medical Journal (18 June 1932) pointing out
 that professional opinion on the matter had
 not progressed in over 100 years, since Marr-
 yat included a case in his Jacob Faithful
(1834) taken from The Times in 1832. Harrison
 thinks the abhorrence of the subject comes
 from "the impossibility of presenting a true
 explanation". I don't think I'd go that far,
 but taking the book as a whole it becomes
 clear that much of the ballyhoo for and against
 centers on preconceptions of what SHC is;
 the very term, like 'Flying Saucer', strangles
 the discussion.

We need to redefine, and find a new ap-
 proach; Harrison tries the latter but fails to
 get anywhere. Harrison's reference to "impos-
 sibility" (above) is because, he thinks, or-
 thodox medical science will never accept some
 of the radical fringe-medicine concepts and
 researches going on today - to do so would be
 to completely alter our notions of disease and
 the physical and mental world, and that is
 even more abhorrent to them. Harrison's quest
 for an answer takes him down the byways of
 spiritualistic notions (auras, etheric bodies,
 mentally directed energy), psychic healing and
 Kirlian photography until he loses his way
 several times over, rescued by the bell her-
 alding a new chapter. He hardly ventures into
 new territory at all. He could have profitably
 made a whole book about the poltergeist con-
 but seems to content himself with re-telling

(and he has an irritating habit of trying to
dramatise stories with imagined dialogue) the
 classic tales easily found elsewhere. The
 blurb's claim, that this is a "puzzle-solving
 book" of "pioneering originality" that "provid-
 es an answer" is wrong on all counts. He also
 adds (in a manner that recalls the boasts of
 vonD) "It is not often that the reader is
 offered a completely unprecedented book: Fire
From Heaven is such a work." Yet not 4 pages
 on he's quoting and acknowledging a "pioneer
 work", Jonas Dupont's De Incendiis Corporis
Humani Spontaneis (Leyden, 1763) - indeed, a
 bibliography full of similar precedents lies
 in the back, and Harrison's "pioneering origi-
 nality" does not extend beyond any of the
 ideas found in some of his sources (eg all the
 elements of his "answer" can be found in Gad-
 dis). The book does not solve anything because
 his "answer" is hypothetical, and, strictly,
 posed as a question, for the last lines of the
 book breathlessly propose little more than an
 unsubstantiated guess: "Is it like this? When
 the control breaks down, a control which must
 superintend and ensure the perfect functioning
 of the two linked and interdependent bodies...
 is the sudden excess energy of Body II blown
 off through Body I, in a sudden, titanic burst
 of force which leaves Body I nothing more
 than 'a rag, a bone and a hank of hair'...and
 often not more than that?"

This rather pompous tone seems to have
 caused lots of errors in the book - eg he re-
 fers the reader to "the victim's screams
 which brought Dr BH Hartwell of Ayer, Mass.,"
 to a woman burning in a wood in 1891, to show
 that Fort was exaggerating when he mused on
 the "notable absence of outcry or seeming un-
 consciousness of victims...". If Harrison had
 quoted the full case (or the little that is
 known), the reader would learn that Dr Hart-
 well was called from his car by another; the
 victim being in advance conflagration - if
 Harrison wanted to counter Fort's idea, he
 could have picked some beauties from Fort's
 own cases. In dealing with Russell's famous
 3-in-1 burning of John Greeley on the ship, SS
 Ulrich, George Turner in a lorry at Upton-by-
 Chester, and Willem Ten Bruik in his car at
 Ubbergen, Holland within minutes of each other
 on 7 April 1938 (incidentally, Russell's own
 writings are not credited, nor listed in the
 bibliography, so I'd guess Harrison is quoting
 2nd-hand from Gaddis), Harrison observes that
 the other two sites are both 340 miles from
 Upton - to his credit, an original discovery,
 but what does it mean? He also suggests the
 sights are linked by the sound/vibration of
 the initial 'U' - laughable when you realise
 it's two 'oo's and an 'uh'. If we're linking
 sounds, he's missed three of the principal
 cases whose victims were Wright, Knight and
 White - and what about Bertholi/Bertilin/
 Bartholin, though to be fair the last two are
 authorities (which in continuity may be being

a victim of sorts). Another obvious link, usually overlooked, is the fact that as Greeley was at the helm when struck, each victim was driving or steering a vehicle - whatever that may mean. The danger of 2nd-hand quoting is illustrated by the way Harrison has obviously been influenced by the sensational aspects of cases as hammed up by Russell via Gaddis, for example. One such classic is the burning of Phyllis Newcombe in a ballroom in Chelmsford about midnight, 27 August 1938. Russell/Gaddis maintain the girl "suddenly burst into intense bluish flames and within minutes was a blackened mass of ash" (cf Gaddis p224). Now Harrison has tracked down the original report in the Daily Telegraph 20 Sept 1938 and summarises: the girl and boyfriend, Henry McAuland, stepped off the dancefloor having danced most of the night (Harrison finds something suggestive about "rhythmic, rotary movements") the girl screams as flames sprout from around her; Henry tries to beat them off with his hands and is burned; "within a minute or two" the girl dies. I have a copy of the key news report here as I write: no mention of bluish flames, charred heaps, or Henry flapping his hands. According to the report, an ambulance arrived about 35 minutes after the incident and took Phyllis to hospital, where she died. I'd guess, not less than an hour later. The mystery is how her dress became alight - it was inflammable, but the inquest ruled out the explanation by Henry himself of a casually flicked cigarette butt. Modern Portean literature has generated and perpetuated similar distortions and sensationalisations to an unknown extent. You must be cautious, because Mr Harrison sometimes is not, and without the original sources you cannot tell where.

I am coming to the conclusion that to tackle the existence of this genuine and puzzling phenomenon from the classical notion of a spontaneous burning will get us nowhere - it has been argued against (equally hypothetically) so many times, and in my view successfully. We need a new approach; one based soundly on the best observational data - because the trouble with SHC is that both sides select cases to prove or disprove the point, as in all logic about hypotheses. It is automatic, and Harrison is not above it. Several times Harrison verges on an intuition that could be a break-through - but it passes, ungrasped, and even sometimes unnoticed. I've been rough with the book deliberately, and beyond what I've said, bearing in mind the caveat and the lack of a listing of cases, it is a valuable collection of data. The definitive sourcebook on SHC has yet to be written - but Fire From Heaven will do well enough in the meantime.

Brigantia by Guy Raglan Phillips (Routledge & Kegan Paul; £4.25; pp224; index, bib, drgs) -- If there is something comical about the question "Was Giggleswick a sanc-

tuary of the goddess Brigantia?" it shows how much we are out of touch with our own past. Phillips, whose name will be familiar to readers of The Ley Hunter, sets out on a search for the almost unknown kingdom of Brigantia, which may have begun in the pre-Celtic Bronze Age more than 3000 years ago, and lasted, maybe, 1200 years, until the Romans found it straddling Britain (roughly from The Wirral to The Wash and northwards to the Scottish border.) The quest wanders through history, pre-history, topography, folklore and tangential subjects compounding what Phillips calls a "mysteriography".

The book is a fascinating web of complex themes: the worship of the eponymous goddess of the Brigantes (also known as Bride, Brigid and even St Brigit) "whose very name may be far older than the Celts"; the cult of stone and severed heads; the network of leys and ancient sites in the area (including a major datum, 4° West of Mag. North, he calls 'The Belinus Line' after that king (apx 500BC) who in legend established holy sites and the roads to them as sanctuaries; the links with the kingdom of Clineshor (Klingsor) of the Germanic Grail legends and other Arthurian relationships; witches, fairies (The Luck of Edenhall), magic ravens, stones and hills, the Green Man and the Horned God of the Witches, and Black Horses in legend and hillside figures; etc. This is a startling mine of exciting cross-connexions - a veritable springboard for new research - yet consolidating the known fragments of myth, fact and folktale.

A Guide to Occult Britain by John Wilcock. (Sidgwick & Jackson; £6.95; pp314; index, bib, photos; also paper, £3.95). -- When I attended the Fortfest in Chicago last year, much mirth was generated by the Ghost Tour, with Rich Crowe intoning seriously "...and up on that hill is a Haunted House, but we can't go in...and on your right a Haunted Churchyard, but it's closed for the night...and...". Mr Wilcock is the author of several guides for travellers and may well qualify for The Oldest Hippie Journalist In The Business, having fought in the Undergrounds on both sides of the Atlantic. I don't blame him for combining his talents with his interest in the 'Occult' - this is a grand way to get a paid holiday - but it has the casual triviality of a street-transaction - wham!bam!thank'ee mam! In introducing himself as your guide, Wilcock admits to being "somewhat glib, unusually articulate and a shade too dominating", and though he is entertaining (in short doses) you get the feeling he'd talk the pointed-hat off a pixie if he met one. Wilcock says that he had to learn "archeology and history. And comparative religions. And contemporary occult thought..." for the book, but he doesn't seem able to take it seriously - oh! he doesn't laugh at it all, but the slick verbiage tries

unnecessarily hard to convince you of the good time he's having (and by implication you will too), and in pre-digesting his information spell for each place he has reduced it all to uniform banality.

It's a fat book - but does it work? Turning at random, I see on p56 "back to the A366 ...then...onto the A36 for Warminster." There then follows just over 2 pages on Warminster.. no wait...they're on Arthur Shuttlewood's vision of the town as UFO capital of the UK; but apart from a mention of "the telephone kiosk at Boreham Field" from which Shuttlewood received calls from outer space (sic), there's no mention of places to visit, things to see. Just keep your eyes peeled for a phonebox, folks, as you drive through reading my book. Not being a driver myself I can't vouch for his directions, but they seem a little terse, especially for the Foreign Visitor unaware of the mysteries of country signposting - but I did notice a distinct lack of milages between Places of Note (essential for planning I'd have thought); or whether you need permission before traipsing across a farmer's fields to see earthworks or tumps, or if some sites have 'opening times' or admission charges. If I were you, I'd take along a Michelin Guide, or the Readers Digest Folklore Myths & Legends of Britain, whatever, along too. The index, which might also have served as a gazetteer, seems arbitrary and inadequate - indeed the structure of the book leaves a lot to be desired, as though all these considerations were the last concern of Wilcock's wandering Gypsy soul. The book draws heavily on the work of Anthony and Jan Roberts, who it seems did all the hard work, mapping the routes and compiling the basic information about places of interest and whose works are frequently quoted but not listed in the bibliography. They are credited, of course for their help, which in a way exonerates them from what follows, when Wilcock and friend take that initial guide material and have fun touring, opining and writing - doing, so he's told us, what comes naturally to him. The result is band-wagon pap, as ultimately unsatisfying as the Chicago Ghost Tour, but by no means as edifying.

Fabulous Beasts & Demons by Heinze Mode. (Phaidon Press; £9.95; pp280; index/glossary, bib, notes, plates & drgs.) --

This is not just a large glossy coffee-table book, but a valuable reference on mythical & fabulous beasts and beings, beautifully produced, and copiously illustrated with drawings, engravings, architectural artwork, sculptures and ornaments and utensils and paintings, of curiosities ranging from the lascivious tritons and buxom mermaids of Arnold Bocklin, to the rampant Chinese and Babylonian dragons, to the demonic statuary of India and Tibet, and to the humanoid angels of Islamic and Christian illuminated manuscripts. However, Mode appears to have selected and categorised

his bestiary arbitrarily into five divisions, divisions that become quite impractical both in the text and the illustrations as he tries to accomodate monsters which are multiple composites of other animals, or in the quaint Victorian term, 'nondescript'. Here you have animals with human heads, and humans with animal heads; multiple-heads; and winged things, strangely mixed with winged-suns, boatmen and walking drums - and a final chapter on 'Journeys to Fabulous Countries' which surely could have included more than ancient geographical speculation and morbid visions of life (if that's the word) in Hell (what about Wonderland, for example, or Never-never land?). Nevertheless, the book is packed with information, even if he does neglect some areas of the fantastic (eg no fairies, or SF). Compared to Borges' Book of Imaginary Beings Mode is fairly dry, but one fancies this the result of the translation from the German, because he is obviously caught up in his subject. The text, illustrations, extensive bibliography, and index/glossary ensure its usefulness. One pecadillo - though the layout of the pages is visually excellent, the price will cause many a rueful glance at the lavish use of blank paper.

Parapsychology & The Nature of Life by John L Randall. (Souvenir Press; £4.00; pp256; index, bib, photos.) -- A sound

critique of the rise of mechanistic reductionism, the material philosophy that has, from Darwin on, sought to reduce all the highest qualities of life, creativity and thought to the random and automatic jugglings of basic materials and processes. Randall also takes a swipe at the prominence of Chance-theory, to which many materialists have recourse in their arguments against any theory of phenomena outside the norm or expected, and which does not mesh with their orthodoxy. In the final chapters, Randall sees this recourse as a last battle, heralding the emergence of a new synthetic science that will acknowledge the "non-physical components of man". Alas space prevents us treating the book in the depth it deserves - but since it discusses the clashes and shortcomings of "dogmatic religion and mechanistic science", no doubt we will be referring to it often in these pages.

The Method of Zen by Eugen Herrigel. (Routledge & Kegan Paul; £1.50; pp102.)

Tao: The Watercourse Way by Alan Watts.

(Jonathan Cape; £3.50; pp134; bib of Chinese & Western sources, plus calligraphy.)-

Herrigel's stark narrative distills the essence of his learning about Zen - his concise style cuts, like a sword-master, through superfluity and his words like arrows fly straight to their targets. The Watts book, similar in intention, is quite different, and rambles like a lazy stream through the peculiar Taoist concepts of yin-yang polarity, tzu-jan (the natu-

ral state of things), Te (the power of this natural state), and wu-wei (allowing natural movement without force or interference). This was Watts's last book and finished off after his death by his friend and T'ai Chi master, Al'Chung-liang Huang. In our quest to understand phenomena, we need the mental tools here extolled. Both books contain clear and even original insights into Zen and Tao, and have direct relevance to the central issues of our studies. ((The Zen book is in paperback.))

PAPERBACKS

Very Special People by Frederick Drimmer. (Bantam; \$1.95; pp357; bib, photos.) --

In 1898, members of circus sideshows met in London to object publicly to the hurtful label 'Freaks', and asked to be referred to as 'Prodigies' if a word were needed. Largely their case has been forgotten or ignored as people could be parted from their money just to gawp at them. Drimmer's book is a compassionate biography of many of these 'Very Special People' as he prefers to call them - tender but not sentimental, as he tells of the physical and emotional tragedies that inevitably prevented the VSP from leading normal lives; eg Julia Pastrana who died of heartbreak when her baby turned out to look as gorilla-like as she did; or Merrick, the Elephant Man, whose cauliflower-textured skin and facial deformities caused such revulsion in all who saw him that he was driven into fantasies about love he could never experience with a woman, and whose enlarged head prevented him sleeping like normal people, until one day he tried, and his neck dislocated, killing him.

Aliens From Space by Maj. Donald Keyhoe. (Panther; 75p; pp303; index).

The Great Beast by John Symonds. (Mayflower; 60p; pp464; index.)

Loch Ness Monster by Tim Dinsdale. (Routledge & Kegan Paul; £2.25; pp171; also hardcover at £3.95.) -- welcome reprints.

INFO's 4th Annual Convention.

Fortfest 76 will be held this year in Washington, at the Hospitality House Motor Inn, Arlington, Virginia, over August 6-8. Those interested in attending, or wishing to receive the progress bulletin, please write to Fortfest: INFO, Box 367, Arlington, VA22210.

The Complete Books of Charles Fort.

INFO has a stock of this long-awaited reprint, by Dover, of the old Fortean Society 1941 edition. This omnibus volume contains 'The Book of the Damned', 'New Lands', 'Lo!', and 'Wild Talents', keeping the same index & pagination as the 1941 edition. You could pay up to \$30 for a disastrous hardcover set of the separate books - so the INFO price of

** ** We have kept some books received for review for the next issue as we're running out of space to deal with them adequately. ** **

To Any American Readers...

Our subscription to the National Enquirer has ended, and we cannot afford to renew it. Would any USA reader be willing to send us Nat. Enq. and even Midnight when they have finished with them? Not only does it help to keep us informed, but the data, for what it is worth, goes into our files. To avoid duplication of effort, and possibly even to arrange a deal, please write to the Editor, FT.

Binders -- we have two possibilities, and I'd like to hear from you before I commit any money, so I can judge the response. Choice A uses wires to hold the mags down the centre-fold; and Choice B uses plastic strips. B is certainly neater, but also more expensive - A could be done within the guesstimate of £2 all in (and made in USA). But B, made in this country, is subject to all sorts of additional costs and VATs so that it could not be offered for less than £2.50. Both will hold 12 issues (ie 2 years) plus their indexes - and both would be in black plastic with silver logos. If we go for A now; we could switch to B later when we can afford it. The other main problem is that minimum orders for A are 100, and B, 200, both of which mean laying out several hundred pounds in advance - this is why it is essential to raise the orders in advance - we just don't have the capital to tie up like that. Please help me decide... ED.

*** As we go to press, the TV news for 2 June tells of 2 severe quakes in China's western Yunnan province; Rines is back at Loch Ness; and a Bigfoot has snatched a California Girl. We've run out of room - so we'll have notes on these and other monsters known and unknown next issue; even our usual review of journals will have to be held over. Apologies. ***

£7.50/\$15.00 (to non-members), £6.25/\$12.50 (to members) is superb value. UK orders can be paid to Fortean Times for convenience; all others apply direct to the INFO-USA address given above.

INFO Journals.

INFO Journal 16 should have arrived at most UK addresses by now. Due to inscrutable mysteries of international postal systems, and reorganisation of INFO administration system, there will be people who are entitled to issues of INFO who've not yet received them. Will anyone who thinks he/she should have had their copies by now, but haven't, please let the Ed of FT know, so he can check the system for errors. That applies to UK readers - all other countries apply direct to INFO-USA.